

# HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

Volume III: Exercise Program Management  
and Exercise Planning Process

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*Office for Domestic Preparedness*

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# Introduction

*“We did not anticipate that airliners would be commandeered and turned into guided missiles; but the fact that we practiced for other kinds of disasters made us far more prepared to handle a catastrophe that nobody envisioned.”*

—Rudolph W. Giuliani, Former New York City Mayor

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP) implemented the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) to assess and enhance terrorism prevention, response, and recovery capabilities at the Federal, State, and local levels. HSEEP is a threat- and performance-based exercise program that provides doctrine and policy for planning, conducting, and evaluating exercises; it employs a cycle, mix, and range of exercise activities of varying degrees of complexity and interaction.

This reference manual reflects the Department’s current direction related to exercise programs and requirements and is derived from the National Strategy for Homeland Security, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Homeland Security Presidential Directives, and other related documents. The National Strategy for Homeland Security directs DHS to develop a National Training and Evaluation System and establish a National Exercise Program (NEP). HSEEP is an essential element of this national program.

The HSEEP series of manuals can be found on the DHS/ODP Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/docs/hseep.htm>:

*HSEEP Volume I: Overview and Doctrine* provides requirements and guidance for the establishment and maintenance of a homeland security exercise program.

*HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement* offers proven methodology for evaluating homeland security exercises and implementing an improvement program.

*HSEEP Volume III: Exercise Program Management and Exercise Planning Process* assists planners in establishing an exercise program and outlines a standardized planning process adaptable to any type of exercise.

*HSEEP Volume IV: Sample Exercise Documents and Formats* provides sample exercise materials referenced in HSEEP Volumes I–III. These materials are available on a secure Web-based portal, discussed in further detail below and in appendix A.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive exercise program is a continuously evolving process. This manual describes current requirements and the assistance available from DHS/ODP. As homeland security strategies, policies, and plans change, revisions to the HSEEP volumes will incorporate necessary updates.

## **Background**

ODP is the principal component of DHS responsible for preparing the United States to respond to acts of terrorism. DHS/ODP is the primary office responsible for providing training, funds for the purchase of equipment, support for the planning and execution of exercises, technical assistance, and other support to help States, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia (hereafter referred to as “States”<sup>1</sup>); tribal governments; and local jurisdictions prevent, plan for, and respond to acts of terrorism.

Several exercises of national and international prominence have demonstrated DHS/ODP’s commitment to enhancing national, State, and local preparedness. In addition to several regional and State efforts, these exercises include exercises to prepare for National Special Security Events (NSSEs) such as the Winter Olympic Games (Salt Lake City, Utah, 2002) and Super Bowl XXXVII (San Diego, California, 2003). DHS/ODP is also responsible for the Top Officials (TOPOFF) series of exercises, including TOPOFF 2000 with epicenters in Denver, Colorado, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and TOPOFF 2 with epicenters in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Seattle, Washington; and Chicago, Illinois.

At the local level, DHS/ODP sponsored the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Domestic Preparedness Program (NLD–DPP), which provided two tabletop exercises (TTXs) and one full-scale exercise (FSE) to 120 jurisdictions throughout the country. DHS/ODP currently administers HSEEP to States, territories, and local jurisdictions.

## **Purpose and Scope**

HSEEP is disseminated on behalf of DHS. In an attempt to standardize the language and concepts adopted and used by the various agencies and organizations involved in the exercise planning process, DHS/ODP encourages States and local jurisdictions to make every effort to ensure consistent use of the terminology and processes described in HSEEP. HSEEP, however, does not take the place of existing exercise programs, particularly those that are regulated (e.g., Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program [CSEPP], Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program [REPP]).

Exercises supported by DHS/ODP grant funding<sup>2</sup> must be threat based with terrorism-related scenarios. Although DHS/ODP-sponsored exercises focus on terrorism/weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the HSEEP series of reference manuals can be adapted to a variety of other scenarios and events (e.g., natural disasters, technology-related events). HSEEP’s intent is to provide consistent terminology, a common process, and a program that is practical and flexible enough for all exercise planners (regardless of their sponsoring agency or organization).

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<sup>1</sup> The word “State” as mentioned throughout this manual refers to the State Administrative Agency (SAA), the designated agency responsible for exercise administration and coordination. Although the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP), oversees and administers the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), the State is ultimately responsible for meeting the requirements outlined in the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) and for ensuring its urban areas and local jurisdictions are in accordance with this doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to DHS/ODP funding through either the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) or UASI.

In recognition that HSEEP users may possess a wide range of experience with exercise design and development, this manual provides a standardized and straightforward process adaptable to a wide range of exercise types, scenarios, and resources.

This volume, *Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program Volume III: Exercise Program Management and Exercise Planning Process*, provides:

- Guidance for establishing an exercise and evaluation program
- Guidance for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating various types of exercises

It is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1:** Exercise Program Management
- Chapter 2:** Exercise Planning Process
- Chapter 3:** Discussion-Based Exercises
- Chapter 4:** Operations-Based Exercises
- Appendices:** Secure Web-Based Portal  
Acronyms

## **Doctrine**

Entities that conduct exercises using DHS/ODP funds are subject to the following HSEEP requirements:

- States must conduct an annual Exercise Plan Workshop (EPW) to examine the progress and effectiveness of their current exercise strategy and program.
- A Multiyear Exercise Plan must be produced from the EPW and submitted to DHS/ODP. This plan must include guidelines for the establishment of a State Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (SHSEEP) and a multiyear exercise schedule (to be updated annually).
- The plan must employ a cycle of activities that includes exercises of increasing levels of complexity.
- The scenarios used in these exercises must be terrorism related and threat based, drawing on the risks and vulnerabilities identified in individual State Homeland Security Strategies.
- All drills, functional exercises (FEs), TTXs, and FSEs must be performance based and subject to evaluation.
- An After Action Report (AAR) must be prepared following every drill, TTX, FE, and FSE. This AAR must be submitted to DHS/ODP.
- An Improvement Plan (IP) must be developed and implemented to address findings and recommendations identified in the AAR. The IP must be submitted to DHS/ODP.
- Periodic exercise scheduling and improvement implementation data must be reported to DHS/ODP.

The remainder of this manual (in addition to HSEEP Volume II) contains further explanation of these requirements, as well as guidance and recommendations for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises. All jurisdictions that implement an exercise using grant

funds and/or direct support from DHS/ODP should use HSEEP processes to enhance and standardize their existing exercise programs.

### **HSEEP Volume IV and Secure Web-Based Portal**

Sample formats and documents referenced throughout this manual are contained in HSEEP Volume IV (available through the DHS/ODP secure Web-based portal). This portal provides a Web-based secure environment in which sensitive documents and materials can be posted and continually updated or enhanced. The exercise portion of the portal contains a library of sample exercise materials (e.g., Situation Manuals [SITMANs], presentations, agendas, sign-in sheets) as well as PDF text of HSEEP Volumes I, II, and III. The portal also includes an Exercise Scheduling and Reporting System, which allows States and jurisdictions to schedule exercises, submit AARs/IPs, and report exercise overview data (e.g., number of participants).

Access to the portal will be granted through the State Administrative Agency (SAA) or its designated exercise or training coordinators. If a jurisdiction wishes to gain access to the portal, it should contact its SAA, which will send out invitations through electronic mail (e-mail). Once invited, a user will need to register at <http://www.odp.esportals.com>.

Further information on the secure Web-based portal and HSEEP Volume IV can be found in appendix A.

### **For Official Use Only/Sensitive Information**

The information contained within this document is not considered sensitive in nature. However, some materials (e.g., scenario examples), particularly those in HSEEP Volume IV, may necessitate certain confidential restrictions. Exercise materials that are produced in accordance with HSEEP guidance and are deemed sensitive should be designated as “For Official Use Only” (FOUO). FOUO is not a classification, but it does make clear to participants that the material is sensitive and should be handled with care. Examples of materials that may require FOUO designations include AARs, IPs, Master Scenario Events Lists (MSELs), and scenario information.

# Chapter 1. Exercise Program Management

This chapter offers guidance on the basic elements of program management needed to effectively interact with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP), and other Federal agency program sponsors, as well as guidance on establishing and coordinating a State Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (SHSEEP) that mirrors the national Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) model.

States and many local jurisdictions have tended to develop exercise programs that reflect their traditional funding sources or their expected real-world hazards such as earthquakes and hurricanes. However, in the aftermath of the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and the sarin incident in the Tokyo subway system in 1995, and the events of September 11, 2001, there has been an expanded emphasis on all-hazards preparedness, particularly for threats and acts of terrorism. This expanded emphasis has created a much greater need for each State to review its exercise program management apparatus and infrastructure. Multiple Federal departments and agencies distribute funding through various grant programs and authorities, and each of these programs has specific requirements and spending limitations. Without dedicated program management capability, States and local jurisdictions can be overwhelmed by varying grantwriting, spending, accounting, and reporting requirements. HSEEP encourages coordination of exercise programs to avoid duplication, ensure standardization and consistency, and relieve the burden on jurisdictions of managing and implementing multiple exercises.

## **State Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program**

Each State should review the existing exercise program to determine if it is sufficiently well organized and if it can be adapted to effectively meet the demands of the changing national preparedness environment. Program management includes all organizational functions that support development and execution of a defined Multiyear Exercise Plan, including:

- Program planning
- Budgeting
- Grantwriting
- Allocating funds
- Planning and executing individual exercises
- Reporting exercise outcomes
- Accounting for grant fund and other expenditures
- Tracking improvements

Each State will develop its own approach, but all of these essential functions should be represented in program management organization. Several functions may be assigned to one person, or a function may have several people assigned to a dedicated team: it all depends on the complexity of an individual State's exercise program and annual workload. Regardless of how each State chooses to organize its own particular program, all of these functions must work in synchronization with one another.

For a State program to be consistent with HSEEP, each State should ensure that it addresses the following tasks:

- Obtaining annual grants and funding
- Identifying roles and responsibilities (e.g., hiring full- or part-time staff or consultants for exercise program development and management)
- Designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises
- Tracking completed resolution of issues and recommendations arising from an exercise and ensuring that action is taken to address issues, responsibilities and due dates are assigned, and improvements are made
- Developing means of monitoring exercises conducted throughout the State and ensuring compliance with HSEEP requirements
- Designating an agency or organization to serve as a clearinghouse for all exercises occurring throughout the State
- Conducting annual activities (e.g., Exercise Plan Workshop [EPW]) to review the current exercise program, ensure that State objectives are being met, and revise or update existing Multiyear Exercise Plan(s) and schedules
- Developing and maintaining the Multiyear Exercise Plan and schedule

The following sections describe the basic functional roles associated with a typical program management organization, particularly as it relates to HSEEP.

### ***Grants Management***

The grant manager should be familiar with various funding programs and administer grants based on State or jurisdiction priorities and strategies. This role includes:

- Receiving training, equipment, and labor cost estimates from jurisdictions
- Budgeting for grant proposal writing and developing detailed exercise budget worksheets
- Receiving budget information from each exercise planning team to use in completing grant applications
- Being aware of upcoming grant awards, and tracking requirements and changes
- Developing an exercise program concept paper that provides an executive overview of the SHSEEP, and, if necessary, developing briefings on program approach and costs
- Tracking expenditures, including:
  - Accounting for all funds by year awarded and by category
  - Preparing attendant reports and action items required by DHS/ODP
  - Maintaining accurate financial records and systems that have the capability to generate reports and accounting data
  - Ensuring all expenditures meet requirements related to approved procedures, plans, and/or policies
  - Making sure all financial reports are prepared according to established guidelines and submitted to the appropriate point of contact (POC)

### ***Dedicated Staff***

Within a program's organization, there should be staff members dedicated to exercise management, coordination, and planning.

*DHS/ODP grant funds can be used to hire and pay exercise officers or coordinators.*

These staff members may be full-time, part-time, or consultants. Further detail on their roles and responsibilities is described in the Exercise Program Organization section of this chapter. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample exercise officer/exercise manager job description.*

### **Exercise Planning**

The planning function involves designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises. It includes the following elements:

- Reviewing and incorporating homeland security strategies
- Identifying goals and objectives
- Obtaining appropriate stakeholder (e.g., Federal, State, and local governments; private sector) input
- Designing realistic, threat-based scenarios based on strategy and threat/vulnerability analysis
- Ensuring exercises are performance based and subject to evaluation
- Developing supporting documentation and presentations
- Conducting and executing exercises
- Meeting exercise and evaluation requirements and doctrine

### **Monitoring**

States and jurisdictions should establish their own means of monitoring compliance to ensure exercise program requirements are met. Monitoring functions may include:

- Submitting receipts
- Applying for grants
- Reviewing exercise materials and documentation
- Submitting documentation (e.g., After Action Reports [AARs]/Improvement Plans [IPs])
- Scheduling planning conferences and actual exercises
- Attending/observing planning conferences and actual exercises
- Ensuring exercises are designed, developed, conducted, and evaluated in accordance with HSEEP and SHSEEP

### **Improvement Tracking**

Planning does not end after an exercise has been conducted and evaluated. It is important to ensure that the issues and recommendations that arise during an exercise are addressed.

Improvement tracking ensures that actions requiring changes in equipment, training, procedures, plans, and/or policies are implemented, and that required tests or other verification of operability (e.g., for new communication equipment) has been performed. This function also ensures that responsibilities and due dates are assigned for all items included in the IP that results from the AAR.

## **Exercise Program Organization**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

State and local governments have direct responsibility for training and exercising their own homeland security professionals. DHS/ODP and its Federal counterparts administer national-level programs that support training and exercise activities involving all levels of government

and private-sector and international partners. Responsibilities for these tasks are complementary and require that all relevant parties collaborate for successful exercise administration.

### **Federal**

DHS/ODP has two categories of exercise programs: State and local exercises and national exercises. A DHS/ODP Exercise Manager has been assigned to work with each State and its local jurisdictions. This Exercise Manager is the DHS official responsible for coordinating with States and local jurisdictions and ensuring accordance with HSEEP. He/she provides direct interface with the State Administrative Agency (SAA) or designated POC, local jurisdictions receiving targeted assistance, and participating Federal departments and agencies. The role of the Exercise Manager is to:

- Review State Homeland Security Strategies and grant applications for exercise funds and, based on identified needs, allocate exercise resources
- Provide targeted assistance for program establishment and maintenance and exercise planning, design, development, conduct, and evaluation
- Work in partnership with the SAA or designated POC to conduct an EPW (described in more detail below)
- Assist States with SHSEEP development and implementation, including creation of a Multiyear Exercise Plan and schedule
- Help State and local governments design, develop, conduct, and evaluate exercises
- Assist with developing schedules and/or working out conflicts in assigned dates
- Maintain an exercise schedule through the DHS/ODP Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) or Secure Portal
- Coordinate assistance from direct exercise support teams. Under the direction of the Exercise Manager, support teams will help States and local jurisdictions with the following tasks:
  - Development of exercise and evaluation programs
  - Creation of specific exercise objectives
  - Preparation of detailed exercise planning and execution timelines
  - Coordination and facilitation of exercise planning conferences
  - Development of a full range of documentation for each type of exercise
  - Preparation of exercise control and evaluation methodology
  - Assistance with exercise control
  - Preparation of postexercise reports (e.g., AARs/IPs)
  - Facilitation of debriefings
- Support and monitor State HSEEP implementation
- Ensure compliance with HSEEP doctrine and policy by periodically reviewing exercise documentation and attending/observing exercise planning conferences and/or exercise conduct

### **State**

The SAA should appoint a staff member(s) to serve as an exercise POC. This person will implement and manage the SHSEEP, coordinate exercise planning, and interface with Federal and local exercise partners. Responsibilities include:

- Function as primary liaison with Federal, State, and local agencies
- Serve as a conduit between the State and the Exercise Manager
- Prepare an assessment of the State Homeland Security Strategy
- Conduct an annual EPW (as described below) and prepare a Multiyear Exercise Plan
- Assist in identifying and prioritizing jurisdictions within the State that will participate in the exercise program and receive resources
- Administer exercise grants
- Use HSEEP manuals and tools to develop and implement a SHSEEP
- Ensure local jurisdictions are designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises in accordance with HSEEP and SHSEEP
- Support the design, conduct, and evaluation of State and local exercises in accordance with the principles and guidance defined in the HSEEP manuals
- Ensure AARs and IPs are prepared and submitted to DHS/ODP
- Establish a mechanism for tracking IP implementation
- Validate areas for improvement identified in the IP by testing them in future exercises

### **Local**

Responsibilities of local jurisdictions that receive exercise support are to:

- Coordinate exercise preparedness activities with the State
- Identify exercise goals and objectives that support the risk, vulnerability, and needs assessments and the State Homeland Security Strategy
- Design and conduct exercises that conform to HSEEP
- Provide information (e.g., plans, procedures) and personnel to aid in exercise design, development, support, control, and evaluation
- Prepare an IP that addresses recommendations in the exercise AAR
- Track action items to ensure exercise issues are addressed and improvements are made

### **Contractor**

If a State or local jurisdiction decides to hire a private contractor or consultant, the State is responsible for ensuring that the contractor/consultant follows HSEEP requirements and guidance.

### ***Exercise Plan Workshop***

An EPW provides DHS/ODP, States, and local leadership with an opportunity to review the current Multiyear Exercise Plan and ultimately modify it or create a new plan. HSEEP requires States that receive DHS/ODP grant funds to conduct an annual EPW that reviews program accomplishments to date, identifies needed modifications, and schedules exercises.

The Multiyear Exercise Plan comprises four major sections:

- **Current Program Status:** Can be drawn from existing documents such as the Multiyear Exercise Plan and State Homeland Security Strategy as well as from schedules of preparedness activities. Planning, equipment, training, and exercises from all agencies and programs should be considered.

- **Program Goals and Objectives:** Should include prevention of terrorist attacks within a State and its local jurisdictions, reduction of vulnerability to terrorism, and minimization of, and ability to recover from, damage caused by attacks. Objectives should be in the form of benchmarks that are specific to the overall exercise program.
- **Program Exercise Methodology:** Should be appropriate to the level of existing training/skills achieved by first responders in the State and its local jurisdictions. DHS/ODP advocates a methodology that represents a cycle of increasingly complex exercises (building block approach).
- **Multiyear Exercise Timeline:** Should graphically illustrate the proposed activities scheduled for the Multiyear Exercise Plan. States are required to submit a 3-year Exercise Plan and schedule and urban areas are required to submit a 2-year Exercise Plan and schedule.

Note that the exercise planning and execution cycles among the jurisdictions in a given State may overlap, as multiple simultaneous planning efforts will likely be needed to achieve Multiyear Exercise Plan goals. Planners may choose to include activities from non-DHS/ODP exercises if these efforts will be coupled with DHS/ODP training and exercise initiatives. The multiyear timeline should allow adequate time for a natural progression of building block exercises. Timelines built during 2003 represent exercise activities expected to take place from January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2006. In 2004, States should create 3-year timelines that represent exercise activities planned for January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2007.

*See HSEEP Volume IV for sample EPW materials including an agenda, a participant list, a briefing, a Multiyear Exercise Plan, and a schedule/timeline.*

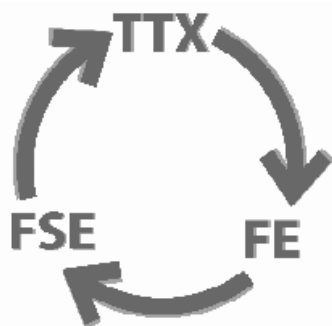
### Attendees

EPW participants should include representatives who will be involved in exercise coordination, planning, and scheduling. It is also beneficial to include representatives from a variety of organizations, programs, jurisdictions/regions, and disciplines to ensure a coordinated effort. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a suggested EPW participant list.*

### Frequency

EPWs should be held on an annual basis. Duration is typically 6 to 8 hours. EPWs should be scheduled in the early portion of a calendar year.

### Exhibit 1



### Cycle, Mix, and Range of Exercises

The Multiyear Exercise Plan should define a cycle of exercise activity that employs increasing degrees of complexity. Linkage to the State Homeland Security Strategy and the relative risks, experience, and preparedness levels of the State and its targeted jurisdictions will enable State planners, in partnership with DHS/ODP, to identify appropriate exercises and provide a foundation for future participation in more complex events. The schedule for training personnel and acquiring equipment should also be considered in determining exercise priorities. An effective exercise program uses a combination of exercise types to effectively

accomplish exercise-specific objectives and program goals. Although each exercise type can be executed as a single activity, greater benefit can be achieved through a building block approach that exposes program participants to gradually increasing levels of complexity, as illustrated by the following example:

- A State's Multiyear Exercise Plan, consistent with its strategy, calls for a full-scale exercise (FSE) to validate the capability of a jurisdiction to conduct mass dispensing operations upon receipt of DHS Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) material.
- After development of a State SNS plan, a series of exercises is scheduled, beginning with a Senior Officials Exercise (SOE) in the form of a seminar delivered to the Governor's office, cabinet members, department heads, and local community leaders from designated dispensing sites.
- A tabletop exercise (TTX) is then conducted to begin addressing strategic coordination of multiple agencies and levels of government. The TTX is followed by a period of refining plans based on discussions and the exercise AAR/IP.
- Various agencies with specific functions then perform a series of drills, including a dispensing drill conducted by the health department and supporting medical staff and a security drill conducted by law enforcement agencies practicing maintaining perimeter security and checking credentials at a reception/storage facility.
- Finally, an FSE incorporates participants from all levels of government; activation of regional, State, and/or local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs); delivery of SNS materiel to a reception site; receipt and storage by the appropriate State agency; breakdown and transportation of SNS material to dispensing sites; and dispensing to victim actors, who are processed and tracked by local healthcare personnel.

At each step in these increasingly complex exercises, lessons learned from the previous exercise are incorporated and/or shared with the next group of participants through an AAR/IP, thus increasing the learning and response capabilities of everyone involved.

#### ***Federal Exercise Program Synchronization***

Every State receives funds from a number of different Federal programs, and many of these programs have associated exercise requirements. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires major airports to conduct emergency response exercises on a 3-year cycle (TTXs every year with an FSE every 3 years). Other agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) all require exercises to be conducted on a regular cycle.

Faced with myriad requests for exercises, many State agencies (e.g., law enforcement, health departments, EOCs) with limited resources have begun to use the DHS/ODP-provided EPW as an opportunity to coordinate schedules at the State and local levels.

DHS/ODP, like other agencies, recognizes the need to synchronize exercise requirements at the Federal level. Efforts to synchronize requirements within DHS have already begun, and cooperation with other Federal agencies is being initiated. In the interim, a considerable amount

of synchronization can occur at the State and local levels. DHS/ODP encourages States to synchronize their exercise activities as much as possible.

A coordinated and integrated HSEEP should reduce the burden on States and local jurisdictions of conducting numerous exercises and should eliminate duplicative efforts. DHS/ODP funds also can be used to supplement other exercise programs. For example, if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is sponsoring a bioterrorism TTX in a given jurisdiction, the jurisdiction does not need to use DHS/ODP funds to conduct a second, similar exercise. Instead, the funding and efforts can be combined.

### ***Exercise Policies***

Exercise policies are developed to provide guidance or parameters of acceptable practices for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises. These policies are designed to prevent or, at a minimum, mitigate, the impact of an action that may cause bodily harm to participants, destroy property, or embarrass the State/local community or DHS/ODP.

All jurisdictions conducting a terrorism exercise funded with a DHS/ODP grant must meet specific exercise policy requirements and also maintain consistency with the scope of the exercise. For example, discussion-based exercises (e.g., seminars, workshops, TTXs, games) do not require policies that address the use of victim actors or the actual deployment of emergency response vehicles.

The following list of policies to consider is not intended to be all inclusive. States and local jurisdictions may also need to develop policies that are appropriate to their individual situations, such as policies that cover exercises conducted during nighttime hours and the use of canine units, opposing forces, or special effects (e.g., pyrotechnics, high explosives). Other examples include:

- General and exercise-specific safety requirements covering areas such as exercise setup, operations, and use of electricity
- Dealing with the media
- Activity-specific safety requirements related to, for example, access control, pedestrian/vehicular traffic, or use of emergency lights/sirens
- Following actual emergency procedures such as use of emergency phrases, emergency cancellations, communication procedures, procedures for calling off an exercise, weather considerations, and medical actions
- Fire safety procedures covering emergency response and refueling operations
- Requirements related to weapons safety, use of force, and rules of engagement

*See HSEEP Volume IV for examples of general safety, weather considerations, weapons safety, rules of engagement, emergency cancellation, and media policies.*

### **Exercise Data Reporting**

Exercise data will be reported by State and local jurisdictions for all exercises that use DHS/ODP funds. Every effort will be made to eliminate redundant reporting of data by identifying reporting dates and requirements for each report.

**Data for Exercise Plan Workshop**

Data reporting for exercises designated to receive Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) or Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funding begins at the annual EPW with submission of the final Multiyear Exercise Plan. One of the EPW's purposes is to finalize the timeline for first-year exercise activities. Minimum information includes jurisdiction name, exercise type, scenario, exercise date, and date of Initial Planning Conference (IPC) or concept development meeting (whichever is appropriate). The remaining years on the timeline will include as much information as is known at the time of the EPW. For example, an exercise may be listed with a tentative month, instead of a specific date, with the dates for its planning conferences to be determined. This timeline will be submitted to DHS/ODP by the State exercise POC, as part of the Multiyear Exercise Plan, within 60 days of the EPW.

*See appendix A for more information on submitting plans, documents, and reports to DHS/ODP through the secure Web-based portal.*

**Data for Postexercise Report (Inclusion in After Action Report)**

The postexercise report will be completed by the POC and submitted to the DHS/ODP Exercise Manager within 60 days. Follow guidance on the reporting format provided in *HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement*. AARs/IPs and exercise overview data (e.g., number of participants) can be submitted through DHS/ODP's Secure Portal.

## Chapter 2. Exercise Planning Process

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 outline the necessary steps and milestones associated with designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating a successful exercise. These chapters are organized as follows:

- General guidance on designing and conducting various types of exercises
- Information common to all discussion-based exercises (e.g., seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises [TTXs], games) and operations-based exercises (e.g., drills, functional exercises [FEs], full-scale exercises [FSEs])
- Information specific to each exercise type.

These chapters are organized in this manner to allow planners flexibility when designing and developing an exercise. However, in an attempt to standardize the language and concepts adopted by and used in the exercise field, planners should consistently use the terminology and processes described in this manual. More detailed descriptions of many of the exercise concepts and materials addressed in this section appear later in the manual.

### Exercise Planning Team

Successful exercises can be attributed to several factors, ranging from the support of elected officials to skilled planning and execution by the exercise planning team. This team is responsible for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating all aspects of any exercise (either discussion or operations based). The planning team determines exercise objectives, tailors the scenario to jurisdictional needs, and develops documentation used in evaluating, controlling, and simulating. Members of the planning team also help with developing and distributing pre-exercise materials and conducting exercise briefings and training sessions. Because of this high level of involvement, planning team members are ideal selections for exercise controller and evaluator positions.

The planning team is managed by a Lead Exercise Planner (also referred to as the Exercise Director, Exercise Planning Team Leader, or point of contact [POC]). The planning team should be of manageable size and should include a representative from each of the major participating jurisdictions and response agencies. For a single-jurisdiction exercise, planning team members should represent key agencies and departments. For a larger, multijurisdictional exercise, planning team members should include representatives from each jurisdiction and participating functional area (e.g., fire, law enforcement, medical, public works).

The membership of an exercise planning team should be modified to fit the type or scope of an exercise. For example, an operations-based exercise may require more logistical coordination than a discussion-based exercise.

Exercise planning teams use a combination of common principles, including:

- **Incident Command System (ICS) Structure:** Exercise planning teams are most efficient and effective when they adhere to an ICS-based structure. This structure has many benefits,

including a distinct chain of command and accountability system that ends with the Lead Exercise Planner.

- **Project Management:** Effective project management ensures identification, development, and management of critical and supportive tasks; frequent communication about project status; and use of management plans and timelines (e.g., task schedules, Gantt charts).
- **Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities:** Exercise planning team members should be aware of both their individual responsibilities and team responsibilities. Tasks should be identified and assigned to an appropriate planning team member, and clear deadlines should be established.
- **Functional Area Skills:** Subject matter experts (SMEs) should be used in the planning process to ensure that a realistic and challenging scenario is chosen and that the jurisdiction has the appropriate capabilities to respond to such an incident. For example, in a biological terrorism scenario, public health departments and hospitals will have larger roles than special weapons and tactics teams or the bomb squad.
- **Leadership:** Team members should demonstrate appropriate leadership principles, including mentoring, motivation, discipline, personnel management, and time management. Team leaders and members should delegate tasks as necessary.
- **Teamwork:** Planning team members should strive toward group and common goals, using all available expertise while fostering creativity.
- **Standardized Exercise Design/Development Process:** Team members should implement standardized processes (such as incorporating task, time, and project management) into exercise design and development. Exercise planning conferences should be scheduled to develop and review tasks and outputs (e.g., Exercise Plans [EXPLANs], Situation Manuals [SITMANs]).
- **Senior Official Support:** Jurisdictional senior officials should be briefed to gain their support.

Planning team members, as a general rule, are not exercise participants except in smaller, less populated jurisdictions with limited emergency response/management capabilities. In those cases, exercise planning team members who act as both planners and participants should be especially careful not to divulge exercise information in advance. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample exercise planning team organizational chart.*

#### ***Exercise Planning Team Position Descriptions***

Although the planning team may expand or contract in size according to the scope of a given exercise, the Master Task List should remain constant in terms of number and types of tasks. Expanding or contracting the team may cause a member or group leader to assume additional roles. Care should be taken not to overwhelm team members by understaffing the exercise. Providing position descriptions will help individuals who must perform tasks associated with multiple positions. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample master checklist.*

For example, early in the planning process, a logistics group leader may be able to perform the few tasks that would normally be handled by the food/vendor, transportation, or security coordinators because those tasks are spread out over the 6-month exercise design process. However, an individual should be appointed to any given position when its tasks reach a level that requires an individual's dedicated attention.

Planning teams for some smaller, less complicated exercises can begin with a minimum of 4 or 5 people (e.g., Exercise Director, operations coordinator, evaluation coordinator, logistics coordinator, administration/finance coordinator).

Providing exercise planning team members with clearly stated roles and responsibilities, along with assigned specific tasks and completion timelines, will facilitate the exercise planning process by ensuring that tasks are not overlooked, forgotten, or identified only at the last minute.

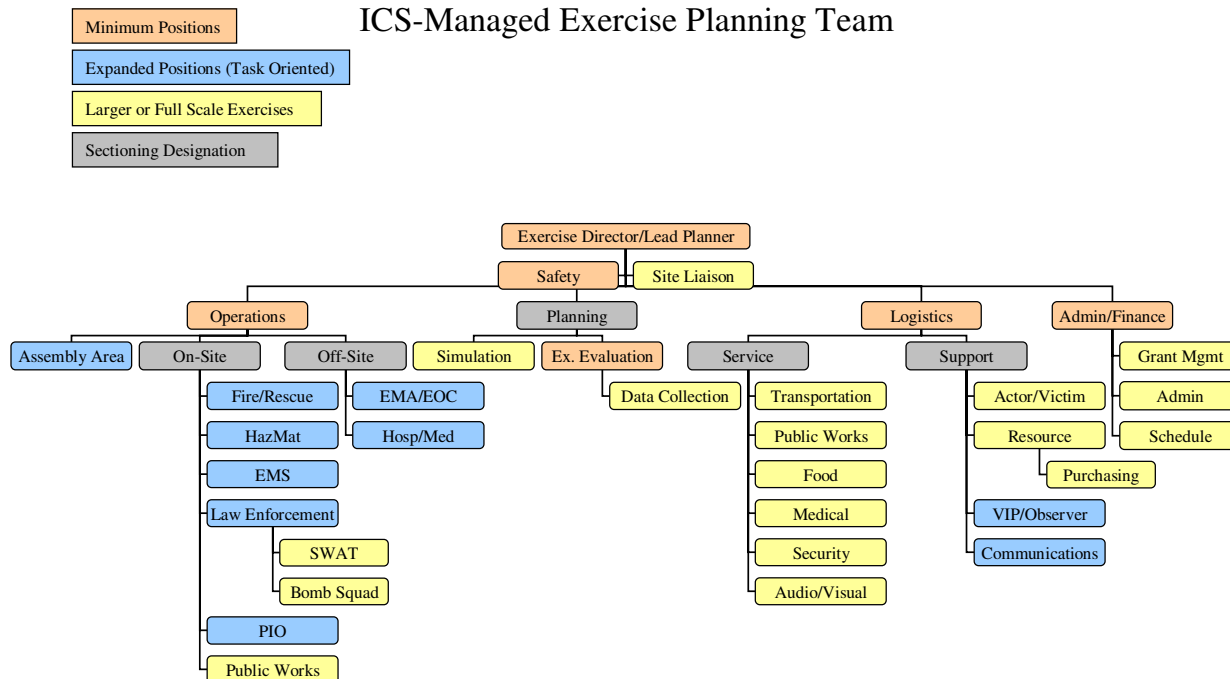
Regardless of whether an exercise warrants a small or large planning team, certain core groups with specific assigned responsibilities must be formed. The core groups described below provide the basis for potential expansion of the planning team (commensurate with the scope of the exercise):

- **Command Group:** This group, also referred to as the *exercise directorate group*, is responsible for coordination of all exercise planning activities. The command group consists of an Exercise Director/Lead Planner who assigns exercise tasks and responsibilities, provides guidance, establishes timelines, and monitors the development process. A Safety Officer and Liaison Coordinator report directly to the Exercise Director.
- **Operations Group:** This group provides most of the technical or functional expertise for the participating agencies or jurisdictions.
- **Planning Group:** The planning group is responsible for the evaluation/improvement process, which includes the collection and review of policies, plans, and procedures. A separate simulation section provides simulated response by agencies not participating in the exercise. This group also develops simulation cell (SIMCELL) injects for exercises that use this methodology (such as FEs).
- **Logistics Group:** The logistics group provides the supplies, materials, facilities, and services that enable the exercise to function smoothly without outside interference or disruption. This group is divided into two sections: service and support. The service section provides transportation, barricading, signage, food and drinks, real-life medical capability, and exercise site perimeter security. The support section provides communications, purchasing, general supplies, Very Important Person (VIP)/observer processing, and recruitment/management of victim actors.
- **Administration/Finance Group:** The administration/finance group provides grant management and administrative support throughout exercise development. This group is also responsible for the registration process and coordinates schedules for the Exercise Director.

During the planning process, as tasks increase in frequency and complexity, the planning team grows. It may be necessary to expand positions to include several functional experts or SMEs (e.g., representatives of law enforcement, fire and rescue, or public health) in the operations group and additional logistical support or service staff (e.g., representatives of public works, representatives of communications, victim actor coordinator). Many large, complex, or multijurisdictional exercises may start with a planning team that fills most, if not all, of the sample organizational structure depicted in exhibit 2 below. In these cases, leaders must be prepared to delegate responsibility. *See HSEEP Volume IV for detailed position descriptions.*

## Exhibit 2

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART ICS-Managed Exercise Planning Team



## Planning Conferences

This section describes the types of planning conferences most useful in exercise design and development. The Lead Exercise Planner and the exercise planning team should decide on the number of meetings needed to successfully conduct a given exercise. To effectively host planning conferences, the Lead Exercise Planner needs access to information on the program, its objectives, and its flexibilities and limitations. Listed below are basic descriptions of the primary objectives for each type of planning conference along with information on tools (e.g., agendas, draft documents, checklists and presentations) used to assist the exercise planning team in designing, developing, and conducting an exercise.

Depending on the individual exercise, planning team members can be drawn from a variety of response disciplines within a jurisdiction (e.g., fire/hazardous materials [HazMat], emergency medical services [EMS], law enforcement, emergency management, public health, and medical/hospital). *See HSEEP Volume IV for suggested planning team members for both discussion-based and operations-based exercises.*

Providing advance information to the planning team members significantly enhances the efficiency of a planning conference. These materials may be provided to team members in a read-ahead packet, which typically includes (but is not limited to) proposed agenda items, any relevant background information (such as rationale for conducting the exercise), planning team member bios, and expected conference outcomes. In addition to making the attendees better

informed, a read-ahead packet also allows them to understand the relevancy and importance of the conference. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample read-ahead materials for each type of planning conference.*

### **Concept and Objectives Meeting**

A Concept and Objectives (C&O) Meeting is held to identify the type, scope, objectives, and purpose of the exercise and is the formal beginning of the planning process (when held directly before the Initial Planning Conference [IPC]). The C&O Meeting is typically attended by representatives of the sponsoring agency, the Lead Exercise Planner, and senior officials. The C&O Meeting should help planners identify an overall exercise goal, develop rough drafts of exercise objectives, and identify exercise planning team members. For less complex exercises and for jurisdictions with limited resources, the C&O Meeting can be conducted in conjunction with the IPC. Possible topics or issues for a C&O Meeting include:

- Exercise purpose
- Proposed scenario, goals, and objectives
- Exercise location, date, and duration
- Assumptions and artificialities (the scenario is plausible and events occur as they are presented; there are no hidden agendas or trick questions)
- Control and evaluation
- Security organization and structure
- Logistics

*See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample C&O Meeting agenda.*

### **Initial Planning Conference**

#### **Primary Focus**

The IPC lays the foundation for exercise development. Unless a C&O Meeting is held, the IPC is typically the first step in the planning process. Its purpose is to gather input from the exercise planning team on the scope, design requirements and conditions (such as assumptions and artificialities), objectives, level of participation, and scenario variables (e.g., threat/hazard selection). The IPC is also used to obtain the planning team's input on exercise location, schedule, duration, and other details required to develop exercise documentation.

During the IPC, planning team members are assigned responsibility for tasks associated with designing and developing exercise documents (e.g., Master Scenario Events List [MSEL], SITMAN) and logistics (e.g., scene management, personnel). In addition to conducting the conference, the exercise planning team should gather appropriate photos and audio recordings for use in preparing the final document(s) and/or multimedia presentation(s) used in support of the exercise. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample IPC agendas for both discussion- and operations-based exercises.*

#### **Length**

Depending on the scope of the exercise, the IPC can range from 3 to 6 hours.

## **Location**

Location is determined by the Lead Exercise Planner. Facilities should be conducive to discussing and accomplishing work-related tasks.

## **IPC Discussion Points**

Possible discussion points include:

- Understanding the rationale for developing the exercise
- Ensuring objectives are clearly defined and measurable
- Incorporating community emergency operating procedures (EOPs) and/or relevant agency standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Identifying local issues, concerns, or sensitivities
- Ensuring that exercise planners consider themselves “trusted agents” and understand that, in most cases, they will participate as facilitators or SMEs rather than as participants
- Incorporating photographs and/or audio/visual (A/V) recordings specific to the community into exercise documents and multimedia presentations (to enhance realism)
- Deciding whether to record exercise proceedings (audio or video)
- Determining the optimum duration of the exercise
- Conducting the exercise in a no-fault environment intended to validate plans and procedures (either through discussion and/or actual demonstration) and identify problems and potential solutions
- Selecting or developing an evaluation tool (e.g., participant feedback forms) to determine whether exercise objectives were achieved and to allow participants to provide feedback
- Developing a planning schedule
- Reaching a consensus regarding the date, time, and location of the next conference

## **Tools**

The primary tools for the IPC are the read-ahead packet, agenda, sample exercise objectives, hazard information (if applicable), proposed room layout (for discussion-based exercises), and task checklist. A briefing is useful for presenting an overview of the exercise to the planning team. *See HSEEP Volume IV for samples of these IPC materials for both discussion- and operations-based exercises.*

## **IPC Outcomes**

The following outcomes are expected:

- Developing clearly defined, obtainable, and measurable objectives
- Identifying scenario variables (e.g., threat scenario, number of casualties, venue)
- Ensuring appropriate participants are invited
- Identifying and recruiting SMEs and presenters, if necessary
- Determining the best method for information delivery
- Assigning responsibility for exercise documents (e.g., SITMAN, EXPLAN) and presentations/briefings
- Acquiring all source documents (e.g., policies, plans, procedures) needed to draft exercise documents and presentations

- Identifying and assigning responsibility for logistical issues (e.g., registration, badges, invitations)
- Establishing dates for completion of action items and tasks
- Developing a planning schedule
- Identifying critical tasks for the next planning conference
- Determining date, time, and location of the next conference and the actual exercise

### **Followup**

IPC minutes should be prepared and disseminated among planning team members within 4 working days of conference conclusion. Direct and continual contact should occur among all members of the exercise planning team regarding outstanding information and the logistics for conducting additional planning conferences and the exercise itself.

In the period between the IPC and the next conference, exercise planning team members will prepare their assigned draft exercise documents and presentations. If possible, these materials should be provided to planning team members 5 days in advance of the next conference.

### **Mid-Term Planning Conference**

Mid-Term Planning Conferences (MPCs) typically are used in more complex operations-based exercises (e.g., FEs, FSEs, ). MPCs provide additional opportunities to settle logistical and organizational issues that arise during planning.

### **Primary Focus**

The MPC is a working session for discussion of exercise organization and staffing concepts, scenario and timeline development, scheduling, logistics, and administrative requirements. It is also a session to review draft documentation (e.g., scenario, EXPLAN, Controller and Evaluator Handbook [C/E Handbook], Control Staff Instructions [COSIN], MSEL). At the conclusion of the MPC, selected planners should conduct a walkthrough of the proposed exercise location/venue (e.g., stadium, arena, parking lot). If only three planning conferences are scheduled, the second half of the MPC should be devoted to development of the scenario timeline (e.g., MSEL, Procedural Flow [PROFLOW] for operations-based exercises).

### **Length**

Depending on the agenda, the MPC is generally a full-day conference (especially if only three planning conferences are scheduled). The exercise planning team should allow sufficient time to conduct a walkthrough of the exercise site and gather pictures, maps, and other visual aids.

### **Location**

The MPC should be held at, or near, the exercise site to facilitate the walkthrough.

### **Tools**

MPC tools include (but are not limited to) an agenda, IPC minutes, draft scenario timeline, draft documentation (e.g., EXPLAN, C/E Handbook), and other selected documentation needed to illustrate exercise concepts and provide planning guidance. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample MPC materials for operations-based exercises.*

## **Outcomes**

The following outcomes are expected:

- Agreement on final EXPLAN details (if applicable)
- Review of scenario timeline (e.g., MSEL, PROFLOW)
- Review of documentation (e.g., EXPLAN, C/E Handbook, COSIN)
- Development of scenario injects (imperative if only three conferences are scheduled)
- Agreement on exercise site
- Finalization of date, time, and location of the Final Planning Conference (FPC)

## **Followup**

MPC minutes should be prepared and distributed to the planning team within 4 working days of conference conclusion. The time between the MPC and the FPC should be used to finalize the EXPLAN, scenario timeline, and remaining exercise documentation (as determined at the IPC).

### ***Master Scenario Events List Conference***

For more complex operations-based exercises, one or two additional planning conferences, or MSEL conferences, may be held specifically to review the scenario timeline. If not held separately, MSEL conferences can be incorporated into the MPC and FPC.

The MSEL conference should focus on MSEL development. The MSEL is a chronological list that supplements the exercise scenario with event synopses, expected responses, objectives to be demonstrated, and responsible personnel. The MSEL should include scenario events that will prompt players to implement the plans, policies, and procedures that planners want the exercise to test. It should also establish the methods that will be used to inject each particular event (e.g., phone call, fax, radio call, e-mail).

In developing an MSEL, the exercise planning team must first consider the tasks, conditions, and standards set forth by each exercise objective (as determined during the IPC). A task consists of performing a behavior that demonstrates the ability to accomplish an objective. A condition is the environment in which a task is performed: it can be established by the scenario or through the MSEL. Standards are the criteria by which each task is evaluated. The planning team determines if tasks were completed; this allows evaluation to take place.

If scenario conditions do not stimulate the appropriate behavior, the planning team must develop an MSEL entry to explain the situation. A well-written entry considers the following:

- Is the entry a key event (i.e., is it directly related to meeting an exercise objective)?
- What is the target behavior? Who will demonstrate the behavior?
- What will stimulate the behavior (e.g., course of play, phone call, actor, video)?
- Who originates the stimulant? Who receives it and how?
- What is the expected action?
- Must a contingency inject be developed in case the behavior fails to be demonstrated?

Once the MSEL is drafted, the exercise planning team should coordinate and sequence entries and resolve any conflicts between events, thus forming a credible and challenging MSEL that

will enhance the exercise experience for the players. It is essential that the final MSEL be reviewed with quality assurance procedures in mind.

*For more information on MSELs, see chapter 4.*

### **Final Planning Conference**

#### **Primary Focus**

The FPC provides the final forum for reviewing exercise processes and procedures. The planning team will receive final drafts of all exercise materials prior to the FPC. No major changes to the design or scope of the exercise or its supporting documentation should take place at the FPC. The FPC ensures that all logistical requirements have been arranged, all outstanding issues have been identified and resolved, and all exercise products are ready for printing.

#### **Length**

Generally, the FPC is a half-day conference for discussion-based exercises and a full day for operations-based exercises.

#### **Location**

The FPC should be located in close proximity to the planned exercise site to allow a final site walkthrough. The facility should be conducive to discussion and accomplishment of work-related tasks.

#### **Points To Stress During the Conference**

The following items should be addressed:

- Resolve any open issues related to exercise planning and identify last-minute concerns that may arise
- Review all exercise logistical tasks (e.g., schedule, registration, attire, special needs)
- Conduct a comprehensive final review of and approve all exercise documents (e.g., SITMAN, EXPLAN, MSEL, C/E Handbook, COSIN) and presentation materials

#### **Tools**

Primary tools include IPC and/or MPC minutes, an agenda, and draft exercise documents (e.g., SITMAN, EXPLAN, C/E Handbook, COSIN). If possible, these materials should be delivered to planning team members 5 days prior to the FPC. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample FPC materials for both discussion- and operations-based exercises.*

#### **Outcomes**

The FPC should not generate any significant changes or surprises. Outcomes should include finalization of exercise documents and multimedia presentation(s), and coordination of other support requirements. The following outcomes should be expected:

- Clear understanding and final approval of exercise processes and procedures
- Approval of exercise documents and materials for production
- Identification and resolution of last-minute issues

- Confirmation on logistical elements including A/V equipment, room configuration and setup, refreshments, and schedule

**Followup**

FPC minutes should be prepared and disseminated among exercise planning team members within 4 working days of conference conclusion. There should be direct contact among exercise planning team members regarding any outstanding issues, especially issues related to the logistics for conducting the exercise. The planning team should finalize all publications, prepare all supporting materials, rehearse presentations and briefings, and prepare to conduct the exercise. Prior to the exercise, information and documentation should be disseminated to appropriate personnel (e.g., presenters, facilitators, controllers, evaluators, simulators).

## Chapter 3. Discussion-Based Exercises

Discussion-based exercises are normally the starting point in the building block approach to the cycle, mix, and range of exercises. Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games. These types of exercises typically focus on existing plans, policies, mutual aid agreements, and procedures. Thus, they are exceptional tools for familiarizing agencies and personnel with current or expected jurisdictional capabilities. They may also provide a forum for developing new plans and procedures. Whereas operations-based exercises tend to focus more on tactical response issues, discussion-based exercises typically focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues. Facilitators and/or presenters usually lead the discussions, helping to keep participants on track and ensure that exercise objectives are met.

### Foundation

It is important to establish a foundation for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating an exercise. In order to establish this foundation, it is essential to identify a planning team, schedule planning conferences, and establish milestones and a project timeline. Tools for effective project management include charts, timelines, secure Web-based portals, and checklists. *See Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Volume IV for sample project management tools.*

### Exercise Planning Team

The exercise planning team for discussion-based exercises is typically smaller than the team needed for operations-based exercises. Because of this smaller size, members should be willing to accept additional responsibilities not necessarily associated with their assigned group (e.g., planning, logistics, administrative/finance, operations). *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample exercise planning team organizational chart.*

### Planning Conferences

Discussion-based exercises typically require a minimum of two planning conferences. These conferences are used to design and finalize exercise documentation. Depending on their scope, seminars and workshops may require only one conference. The Concept and Objectives (C&O) Meeting, used to identify broad issues and provide general direction, is usually part of the Initial Planning Conference (IPC) for discussion-based exercises. In fact, the vast majority of issues should be identified and assigned at the IPC. The Final Planning Conference (FPC) should be used to review previously developed/completed items. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample planning conference materials for discussion-based exercises.*

*Exercise designers should be particularly cognizant of any sensitivities addressed in scenarios, such as actual names associated with known terrorist groups or selected venues (e.g., school names, private company names).*

### Project Management Timeline

The Lead Exercise Planner selects a date for the IPC. The IPC marks the beginning of the exercise planning timeline. During and after the IPC, exercise plans, documents, and logistics are discussed and finalized (based on the type of exercise selected). Once a timeline has been established, the planning team must follow it. All planning team members should have input

into timeline development and access to the final timeline once it is completed. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample timelines that indicate key conferences and activities necessary for conducting discussion-based exercises.*

## **Design and Development**

The design and development process should focus on identifying objectives, creating documentation, coordinating logistics, planning exercise conduct, and selecting evaluation and improvement methodology, thus building on the established foundation for the exercise.

### **Exercise Objectives**

Exercise objectives are the cornerstone of design and development. Objectives define specific goals, provide a framework for scenario development, guide development of individual organizational objectives, and provide evaluation criteria. Generally, planners should limit the number of exercise objectives to enable timely exercise execution, facilitate reasonable scenario design, and adequately support successful completion of exercise goals. Objectives are initially prepared during concept development; for a discussion-based exercise, they typically focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample discussion-based exercise objectives.*

### **Scenario**

A scenario provides the backdrop that drives exercise participant discussion. The scenario should be threat and performance based, realistic, plausible, and challenging. However, designers should ensure that the scenario is not so challenging that it overwhelms participants.

A scenario consists of three basic elements: the conditions that allow participants to demonstrate proficiency and competency in meeting the exercise objectives; the general context or comprehensive story; and the technical details necessary to accurately depict scenario conditions and events. The planning team should ensure that the design effort is not characterized by a fixation on scenario development; the scenario should facilitate achievement of exercise objectives, which are the foundation of exercise design.

Planners must identify the kinds of player activities and decision-making opportunities needed to meet exercise objectives, then ensure that those activities and opportunities can take place within the scenario framework. Detailed information should be limited in quality and quantity to reflect real-world uncertainty. No superfluous information should be included.

### **Realism**

The scenario should involve local incidents and local facilities; findings from a jurisdiction's risk and vulnerability assessment can contribute to scenario development. For example, if the risk and vulnerability assessment identified a specific critical infrastructure in the community (e.g., refinery, chemical plant) as a vulnerable target, the scenario could describe a terrorist attack at that facility. Planning team members should also consider previous real-world incidents and existing plans that have been developed for popular local attractions or large venues. Remember that the scenario must be credible enough for a participant to suspend his inherent disbelief in hypothetical situations. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP), is developing a common suite of scenarios that will be based on incidents of national significance.

## **Threat/Hazard**

The first step in designing a scenario is determining the type of threat/hazard on which the exercise will focus.. Each type of hazard has its own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to evaluating different aspects of prevention, response, and recovery. The exercise planning team should choose a threat/hazard that fits the exercise objectives. For example, if the exercise objectives include validating public health or surveillance systems, then a biological hazard would be appropriate. Conversely, if exercise objectives seek to evaluate on-scene Incident Command (IC), then a biological hazard would not be the best choice. Hazard selection should be based on realistic threats. For example, in a highly populated, high-profile community, the threat of chemical, biological, or radiological terrorism may be considered more of a risk, whereas in predominately rural areas, industrial or agricultural assets may be more vulnerable to acts of terrorism. *See HSEEP Volume IV for hazard fact sheets.*

## **Venue**

The venue is the facility or site where the scenario will take place. Venue selection should be based on the identified threat or hazard. For example, if a non-persistent chemical hazard (e.g., sarin) is selected, the venue should not be an open-air facility (e.g., stadium, park) because of that hazard's dissipating characteristics. When appropriate, the selected venue described in the scenario should be based on a jurisdiction's risk and vulnerability assessment. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a scenario variable selection matrix.*

## **Documentation**

### ***Situation Manual***

The Situation Manual (SITMAN) features an overview of the exercise (e.g., scope, objectives, conduct) and contains a chronologically sequenced scenario representing a specific disaster situation and the local jurisdiction's anticipated response actions.. This scenario reflects the exercise objectives selected by the jurisdiction, including selected hazard and magnitude of casualties.

Generally used in TTXs, the SITMAN is designed to mirror the multimedia briefing. It supports the scenario narrative and allows participants to read along while watching events unfold. The SITMAN contains greater detail than the presentation and can include the following information:

- Introduction
- Schedule of events
- Purpose and scope
- Design objectives
- Exercise structure (e.g., modules)
- Instructions for exercise conduct (e.g., selecting a spokesperson)
- Roles and responsibilities for facilitators, participants, and observers
- Assumptions and artificialities
- Exercise rules (for example, participants should respond based on knowledge of current plans and capabilities)
- Local information (e.g., local agency names, pictures of response apparatus)
- Scenario

- Issues for consideration (key questions to be discussed during the exercise)
- Reference appendixes containing:
  - Jurisdiction- and threat-specific information
  - Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) or agent fact sheets
  - Relevant documents regarding response plans
  - List of reference terms

*To discourage participants from reading ahead in the SITMAN scenario during the exercise, a sticker can be placed over each module so the pages can't be turned until the facilitator directs the participants to unseal the module.*

The SITMAN contains modules that correspond to the multimedia presentation. Modules, because they are based on each exercise's goals and objectives, will differ from scenario to scenario. For example, biological exercises typically contain an incubation module, whereas chemical, radiological, nuclear, or explosive scenarios should include warning phase, initial response, and recovery and remediation modules. See *HSEEP Volume IV* for sample SITMANs.

When developing the SITMAN, the following items should be considered and addressed:

- Realistic response times
- Proper agency or organization names
- Proper lines of communication (e.g., notification procedures)
- Existing community capabilities (e.g., equipment, apparatus)

#### **Multimedia Presentation**

The multimedia presentation for a discussion-based exercise should support (both visually and with audio) the written documentation. Participants should be able to read the written material while watching or listening to the presentation. The presentation itself should concisely summarize information contained in the written documentation.

This presentation typically contains, at a minimum, the following information:

- Introduction
- Background on the threat or scenario and/or the history of terrorism
- Objectives
- Exercise play rules (e.g., keep side conversations to a minimum, turn cellular phones to silent mode)
- Modules that describe the scenario

Audio/visual (A/V) enhancements to a presentation include video or sound systems that convey information to exercise participants. For example, discussion-based exercise presentations should include sound bites and video clips that have local interest. A video clip of the local mayor conducting a press conference to announce the declaration of an emergency and a sound bite of a 911 call that initiates a response are common examples. These presentations help to

*To add realism to the scenario and supporting presentation, record actual sound bites by people who would normally be speaking during a real incident (e.g., mayor or governor, 911 dispatchers, first responders).*

focus and drive the exercise as well as add realism. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample multimedia presentations.*

### **Exercise Evaluation Guides**

DHS/ODP has developed Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs) to help with exercise evaluation. These guides incorporate the critical tasks to be completed during an exercise. They were developed for use both by experienced exercise evaluators and by practitioners who are subject matter experts (SMEs) but have little or no exercise evaluation experience. Each EEG provides evaluators with information on what they should expect to hear discussed, space to record their observations, and questions to consider after the exercise (as the first step in the analysis process).

Each EEG can be used by one individual evaluator assigned to observe individual tasks or groups of tasks. During the analysis phase, evaluators combine their observations with those of the other evaluators. They reconstruct events, and analyze outcomes and interactions across agencies, disciplines, and jurisdictions to achieve broad mission outcomes. The responsible team (agency or discipline), function, jurisdiction, and mission outcome are noted on the EEG to facilitate analysis. *See HSEEP Volume II for more information and sample EEGs.*

### **Media/Public Information**

Members of the media have the unique ability to fulfill an important function before and during an exercise: not only can they inform the public that an exercise is taking place, they also can make the public aware that the community is preparing for terrorism and disasters.

#### **Written Release**

Prior to an exercise, the planning team should develop a written press release to be disseminated to media outlets. This release serves as a means of informing the media and the public about general exercise information (e.g., location, date). Additionally, this information can be distributed to observers and senior officials (e.g., Very Important Persons [VIPs], management). This release should not contain detailed scenario information (such as the type of threat or hazard, venue, or other sensitive information) and should not contain information that might hinder exercise outcomes if a participant were to see it.

Typically, the contents of a media/public information release for the exercise include:

- Introduction:
  - Sponsoring agency
  - Program information
  - Expected outcomes
- Purpose
- Scope and duration
- General scenario information (e.g., location, goals, objectives)
- Participating agencies broken down by locality and functional area

*See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample media/public information release.*

### **Media Policy**

Local media should be notified about any exercise prior to its taking place. This can help avoid public confusion on the day of the exercise, and also let the public know the community is working to prepare for real-world incidents. It is up to the jurisdiction whether to invite the media to an exercise. If invited, the media should have an opportunity prior to the exercise to conduct interviews with key planners and participants. At discussion-based exercises, the media should not be present during the discussion of standard operating procedures (SOPs), emergency operating procedures (EOPs), or any other potentially sensitive information. If the media would like video footage of exercise proceedings and participants, they should be allowed to film from the back of the room until scenario discussions begin. This allows participants to speak freely and openly during the exercise without outside distractions or intimidation.

### **Logistics**

Logistical details are important (but often overlooked) aspects of an exercise. They can make the difference between a smooth, seamless exercise and one that is confusing. The following paragraphs detail logistical issues that should be addressed prior to an exercise.

#### **Facility/Room**

Meetings and briefings should be conducted in facilities that are appropriate for the scope and size of the exercise. Facilities should be reserved solely for exercise purposes and should be free from distractions. The facility should have accessible parking for all participants.

*Conference rooms and banquet halls are the most ideal facilities for discussion-based exercises.*

The facility should be large enough to accommodate all participants, observers, facilitators, and presenters. Enough tables and chairs should be available for every participant and observer; different table arrangements should be used for different types of exercises. For example, for a conference (where input is needed from all parties), a U-shaped layout is most conducive to facilitation and participant interaction. For a seminar, where there is little participant interaction and information is presented to the audience, chairs and/or tables should face in one direction. For a workshop, the facility should permit breakout sessions in separate rooms. For a TTX, the number of tables should be based on the number of participating functional areas (e.g., one table for the medical community, one table for Federal and State representatives). Table arrangements for a TTX should allow for as much participant and facilitator interaction as possible. When selecting a facility, take the acoustics of the room into consideration (e.g., the room should be carpeted with relatively low ceilings). There should be a limit of 12 to 15 participants per table during a TTX to avoid excessive crowding and noise levels. Facilitators and presenters should control the noise in the room by discouraging side conversations, ensuring cellular phones are turned to silent mode, and keeping control of group dynamics. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample room layouts for discussion-based exercises.*

#### **Food/Refreshments**

Food and refreshments should be provided to participants and observers, especially during prolonged exercises. For discussion-based exercises that exceed 4 hours, it is often beneficial to have a working lunch provided; a working lunch keeps exercise disruption to a minimum.

### **Audio/Visual Requirements**

A key aspect of discussion-based exercises is the multimedia presentation, which injects an added sense of realism to the proceedings. A/V requirements should be identified well in advance and specific responsibilities should be assigned to ensure proper equipment functioning. Examples of A/V equipment include (but are not limited to) projection display screens, video and/or computer projectors, speakers, and microphones (e.g., lapel/lavaliere, handheld).

### **Supplies**

Exercise planners should not assume participants will bring necessary supplies with them. Writing utensils, notepads, easels, SOPs and EOPs, name badges, and any other equipment deemed necessary should be procured prior to exercise conduct and provided to participants.

### **Badges/Name Tents/Table Tents**

Each exercise participant should have a badge clearly identifying him/her by name and agency. Name tents should be placed on tables prior to the start of the exercise to ensure proper seating arrangements. Additionally, each table should have a table tent identifying the functional area (e.g., public health, emergency management) represented. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample badges, name tents, and table tents.*

*To reduce costs associated with an exercise, the planning team could consider producing badges and table tents that can be reused for future exercises.*

### **Registration and Table/Breakout Identification**

Participants should register upon arrival, for both identification and security reasons. Participants and observers should provide their name, organization, phone/fax number, and e-mail address. Table assignments should be predetermined; last-minute changes should be strongly discouraged. The planning team should retain copies of the sign-in sheets so that participants can receive follow-up correspondence such as thank you notes, certificates of completion, copies of the After Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP), and invitations to future planning meetings and exercises.

### **Conduct**

Exercise conduct entails setup, presentation, facilitation, discussion, and wrap-up activities.

### **Logistics**

The planning team should visit the exercise site on the day prior to the event to set up the room. On the day of the exercise, planning team members should arrive several hours before the start time to handle any remaining logistical or administrative items pertaining to setup, and to arrange for registration.

Prior to exercise conduct, the planning team must provide necessary exercise materials, including:

- Adequate number of SITMANs or other written materials for exercise participants
- Multimedia presentation
- Appropriate A/V equipment including televisions, projectors, projection screens, microphones, and speakers
- Table tents for each table

- Name tents for each participant
- Badges identifying the role of each exercise participant (e.g., participant, observer, VIP, facilitator, evaluator)
- Sign-in sheets
- Feedback forms

### **Presentation**

The presentation is a crucial vehicle for conveying information to the audience. Individuals selected to present should be confident of their abilities and able to speak well in front of large audiences. They should not read directly from the presentation slides.

The presentation typically starts with brief remarks by representatives from the exercise planning team, sponsoring agency, and/or governing jurisdiction (e.g., mayor, Governor, city manager, county judge). After the opening remarks, the presentation moves into a brief introductory and explanatory phase led by a moderator. During this phase, attendees will be introduced to lead facilitators and evaluators, given background on the exercise process, and advised about their individual roles and responsibilities.

In addition to presenting the briefing, the moderator will also lead the discussion, bring spokespersons up to the front of the room, pose questions to the audience, and ensure that the schedule remains on track.

### **Facilitated Discussion**

Facilitated group discussions occur at individual tables, and ideally are facilitated by someone with functional area expertise. The facilitator is responsible for keeping the discussion on track with exercise objectives and making sure all issues are explored (time permitting). Characteristics of a good facilitator include:

*Planning team members often make excellent facilitators because they are intimately familiar with the objectives and scenario.*

- Ability to keep side conversations to a minimum, keep discussions on track and within established time limits, control group dynamics and strong personalities, and speak competently and confidently about the subject at hand yet not dominate the conversation
- Subject matter expertise: for example, a facilitator at the public health table should have experience in the public health field or be knowledgeable about public health issues
- Awareness of local plans and procedures (e.g., SOPs, EOPs)
- Ability to capture the discussion in notes for inclusion in the AAR/IP

Participants should discuss their responses based on their knowledge of current plans, procedures, and capabilities. If feasible and/or appropriate, co-facilitators who are knowledgeable about local issues and plans and procedures may assist the lead facilitator(s). Also, to allow the facilitator to focus on key discussion issues, a recorder could be designated to take notes. Facilitated discussions take place before moderated discussions, and are also referred to as *caucus periods*.

### **Moderated Discussion**

In moderated discussions, a representative from each table summarizes and presents results from a group's facilitated discussion to all the participants. This spokesperson should be selected before the facilitated discussion so that he/she can prepare to speak on behalf of the group. During moderated discussions, spokespersons should summarize the facilitated discussion, present key findings and issues, and discuss any unresolved issues or questions. At the end of the moderated discussion period, the floor should be open for questions.

Generally, there are facilitated and moderated discussion periods at the end of each module, with another, longer period for each at the conclusion of an exercise. During the module discussion periods, groups should be careful to focus only on the material presented in a given module.

### **Debrief/Hot Wash**

All facilitators should take and compile notes relevant to their group's facilitated and moderated discussions. This information will be used to generate the AAR and/or exercise notes. In addition, participants and observers should receive feedback forms before the end of the exercise that ask for input regarding their impressions. The questions on this feedback form should solicit, at a minimum, the following:

*A simple yet effective tool for capturing issues and action items during and after an exercise is an easel pad. When wrapping up the exercise, the lead presenter/facilitator could ask each table for three action items that address the issues that arose during exercise discussions. These issues and action items can be captured on the easel pad for everyone to see. This will also ensure items are not repeated.*

- Impressions about logistics (e.g., quality of facilitation/presentation, adequacy of facility/room, acoustics and food)
- Substantive information (e.g., most pertinent issues discussed, action items to address these issues)

The information from these feedback forms should contribute to the issues, observations, and recommendations or action items in the AAR. Planners should pay particular attention to comments regarding logistical issues so future exercises can avoid the same problems. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample participant feedback forms.*

Immediately after the exercise, a short debrief or hot wash should be conducted with exercise planning team members to ascertain their level of satisfaction, discuss any issues or concerns, and propose improvements. Exercise attendance lists should be collected and copies provided to the Lead Exercise Planner. Notes from the debrief or hot wash should be captured in the meeting minutes.

## **Specific Exercise Types**

### **Seminars**

Seminars generally orient participants to authorities, strategies, plans, policies, procedures, protocols, resources, concepts, and ideas. They also provide a good starting point for jurisdictions that are developing or making major changes to existing plans or procedures. Seminars are also useful when attempting to gain awareness of, or assess, the capabilities of interagency or interjurisdictional operations. Seminars are useful whenever there is a need to

provide a common framework of understanding. Within HSEEP, seminars are the basic building block for exercise development.

Seminars can be used to deliver a wide range of topics. Although their topics may be diverse, all seminars share the following common attributes:

- Low-stress environment
- Information conveyed through different instructional techniques, which may include one or more of the following:
  - Lectures
  - Multimedia presentations
  - Panel discussions
  - Case study discussions
  - Expert testimony
  - Decision support tools
- Informal discussions led by a seminar leader
- No real-time “clock” constraints
- Effectiveness with both small and large groups

Prior to participating in a seminar, participants should have a clear understanding of exercise objectives. Goals can range from developing SOPs and EOPs to setting goals for future capabilities. Seminars are typically conducted in a lecture-based format with limited feedback or interaction from participants. They may feature one speaker or a series of speakers from different agencies or jurisdictions. Lecture content can vary, but may include the following:

- Current capabilities
- Current or proposed mutual aid agreements
- Existing disaster plans, SOPs, or EOPs
- Real-world or exercise experiences and lessons learned
- Agency or jurisdictional directions and goals

Seminars do not typically require a formal comprehensive AAR; however, a seminar report should be developed to capture the discussions, issues raised, and (if appropriate) action items that will address these issues.

### **Workshops**

Workshops represent the second tier of exercises in the HSEEP building block approach. Although similar to seminars, workshops differ in two important aspects: participant interaction is increased and the focus is on achieving or building a product (e.g., plans and policies). Workshops provide an ideal forum for:

- Collecting or sharing information
- Obtaining new or different perspectives
- Testing new ideas, processes, or procedures
- Training groups to perform coordinated activities
- Problem solving complex issues

- Obtaining consensus
- Building teams

Products that can be produced from a workshop include new SOPs or EOPs, mutual aid agreements, Multiyear Exercise Plans, and IPs that address the issues and recommendations from an AAR. To be effective, workshops must be highly focused on a specific issue, and the desired outcome (product) or goal must be clearly defined. Examples of workshop goals include:

- Identifying issues that may arise when developing a coordinated response plan for use by entities that have not previously worked together
- Defining new regional response boundaries
- Determining program or plan objectives
- Developing an exercise scenario
- Determining evaluation elements or performance standards

Potential topics and goals relevant to workshops are numerous; however, all workshops share the following attributes:

- Low-stress environment
- No-fault forum
- Ability to convey information using a number of different instructional techniques, including:
  - Lectures
  - Multimedia presentations
  - Panel discussions
  - Case study discussions
  - Expert testimony
  - Decision support tools
- Facilitated, working breakout sessions
- Plenum discussions led by a workshop leader
- Goal-oriented discussion with an identifiable product in mind
- No real-time “clock” constraints
- Effectiveness with both small and large groups

Typically, workshops begin with a presentation or briefing during which the background and rationale for the workshop are conveyed and specific tasks and expected outcomes are delineated. This presentation is typically followed by facilitated breakout sessions. Breakout sessions are used to increase participant interaction regarding the issues most relevant to their functional area. For example, if a workshop’s objectives address interjurisdictional disaster plans, it would have breakout sessions for law enforcement, fire and rescue, and emergency management personnel, among others. Ideally, breakout sessions are facilitated by someone with both subject matter knowledge and facilitation experience. If this is not possible, it is more important to have a good facilitator who can keep the discussion on track than to have subject matter knowledge. Following breakout group discussions, the groups reconvene in a plenum session to present outcomes. During breakout sessions, facilitators should be aware of time constraints, notify participants about progress, and warn them when time is about to expire.

For workshops, reserve one large room in which all participants can see a screen and see all other participants. For breakout sessions, individual rooms (such as classrooms) are ideal.

### ***Tabletop Exercises***

TTXs typically involve discussion by key staff, decision-makers, and elected and appointed officials. This type of exercise is generally held in an informal setting intended to generate discussion of various issues regarding a hypothetical, simulated event. TTXs can be used to enhance general awareness, validate plans and procedures, and/or assess the types of systems needed to guide prevention, response, and recovery from a defined event. TTXs typically are aimed at facilitating understanding of concepts, identifying strengths and shortfalls, and/or achieving a change in attitude. Participants are encouraged to discuss issues in depth, and TTXs allow them to develop decisions through slow-paced problem solving rather than the rapid, spontaneous decision-making that occurs under actual emergency conditions. TTXs can be a cost-effective tool when used in conjunction with more complex exercises; they take less time and cost less than operations-based exercises.

TTX methodologies are divided into basic and advanced categories. In a basic TTX, the scene set by the scenario materials remains constant. This scene describes an event or emergency incident and takes participants through the phases to the simulated present.

In an advanced TTX, play advances through delivery of pre-scripted messages. The Exercise Controller, acting as a moderator, usually introduces problems one at a time in the form of a written message, simulated telephone call, videotape, or other means. Participants discuss the issues raised by each problem, using appropriate plans and procedures. Player decisions are incorporated as the scenario continues to unfold.

TTXs use one of two main design methodologies: breakout or plenary. Breakout methodology uses several breakout groups, typically 10 to 15 players each, seated at various tables. Common interests or responsibilities determine table assignment. Although the scenario is usually presented to all groups simultaneously, individual breakout groups consider their own probable actions based on plans, policies, and procedures. Each group reports to the reassembled plenary at the conclusion of each exercise module.

The plenary method groups players in a large room or hall according to function or responsibility. In a plenary TTX, no periods are set aside for small or subgroup discussions. This type of exercise requires active facilitation, sometimes by a team of facilitators. Use of facilitators generally allows more control over discussion direction; facilitators can draw information from participants to present a clear picture of issues and objectives. Active facilitation can also ensure that the discussion remains issue and policy focused. A plenary format is useful for exercises involving agencies that do not have a tradition of coordinated operations or incident management. It is also the preferred format if most participants are new to TTXs. This format ensures that everyone hears everything that is said and all participants have an opportunity to comment.

Regardless of format or design type, TTXs are usually constructed with the following common features:

- Application of group problem solving
- Familiarization of senior officials with critical issues related to their responsibilities
- Conduct of a specific case study
- Examination of personnel contingencies
- Examination of group message interpretation
- Participation in information sharing
- Assessment of interagency coordination
- Achievement of limited or specific objectives
- Preparation for a more complex exercise (e.g., operations based)

All participants should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion. They should be reminded they are making decisions in a no-fault environment. If breakout groups are used, they should be limited to no more than eight functional areas. To maximize constructive discussion, no more than 12 to 15 participants should be at each functional group table. (These numbers may vary depending on the type and desired length of an exercise.) Facilitators should encourage interaction between groups.

Exercise conduct depends largely on the TTX design and format type. Generally, exercise planning team personnel give a multimedia presentation, facilitate discussion during caucus periods, and moderate ensuing discussion or report-back sessions. At the conclusion of the TTX, the Lead Exercise Planner provides an overview of the day's activities, followed by comments or closing remarks by a member of the exercise planning team.

TTXs require a room where all participants can view a screen and where participants at individual tables can discuss issues without disruption. Because of this requirement, it is ideal to reserve one large room and several smaller rooms (similar to workshop breakout rooms). *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample TTX room layouts.*

### **Games**

Games are hypothetical situations steered by player actions. A force-on-force game (hereafter referred to as a game) has specific rules and uses controllers to enforce its parameters. Game participants may come from the same discipline or different disciplines and/or from the same jurisdiction or from multiple jurisdictions, depending on exercise objectives. This type of exercise explores the consequences of player responses, and can be used to help participants understand the possible consequences of their actions. Thus, it is an excellent tool to use when validating or reinforcing plans and procedures or evaluating resource requirements. Games help responders realize the consequences of their actions and consider appropriate behavior or behavioral guidelines for the future. Decision-making may be either slow and considered or rapid and more stressful, depending on exercise design and objectives.

Games have the following common characteristics; they:

- Develop contingent on player decisions
- Encourage competitive environment
- Provide rapid feedback
- Improve teamwork
- Practice group problem solving
- Test group message interpretation
- Assess interagency coordination
- Familiarize senior officials with homeland security/counterterrorism responsibilities
- Explore potential future scenarios
- Demonstrate consequences of player actions

In a game, the outcomes of player actions are highly dependent on a controller's interpretation of the rules, whereas in computerized simulations (described in the next section), rules are interpreted more strictly. The controller's role is to process the information that is received. Player decisions, subsequent actions, and outcomes rely on the controller's subject matter knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game. The open, decision-based format of a game can incorporate "what if" questions that extend exercise benefits.

Another major variable in games is whether consequences of player actions are scripted or random. After each player action or move, the controller presents the outcome. Depending on the game's design, this outcome can be either pre-scripted or decided after play. Identifying critical decision-making points is a major factor in the success of games: players make their evaluated moves at these crucial points. The controller, guided by the rules, determines the outcomes produced by player actions. Therefore, time must be allotted for the rules of the game to be thoroughly tested prior to game play. If either the critical decision-making opportunities or the rules are deficient, then objectives will not be properly tested.

Generally, attendance at a game is dictated by its objectives and design: that is, how many players participate depends on game objectives, design, and concepts. Due to the limited number of participants, planners are encouraged to open the exercise to observers (if feasible). Observers are asked not to participate in discussions and strategy sessions, but can be tasked to make notes and report back to controllers with feedback.

The exercise planning team begins the game. Interaction among players or teams is encouraged; however, conversations and associations should emulate what is found in the real world.

Controllers must be aware of pre-established rules and procedures, and they must play an ongoing evaluator role. The game may have only one controller or, if there are teams, there may be a controller for every team (under the guidance of a lead controller). The controller ensures that player actions take place within game rules and timeframe. The controller does not prompt or guide player actions. When players perform actions, however, the controller presents the outcome.

All controllers and evaluators make and compile notes relevant to their team's actions. Immediately after the game, a short hot wash will be conducted with the exercise planning team to determine level of satisfaction with the exercise, issues or concerns, and proposed improvements. In addition, participants can provide immediate feedback and capture events as they occur. The planning team should collect game attendance lists and capture notes from the hot wash for inclusion in the AAR.

### **Models and Simulations**

Models and simulations are valuable tools for conceptualizing threats to national security and for working through response concepts. Models and simulations can provide immediate feedback to players within the context of a given scenario. Although live exercises are an irreplaceable component of any preparedness program, simulations can illustrate, in a cost-effective way, the resources available within the homeland security community and the challenges to prioritizing their use. When used to complement live exercises, models and simulations can perform systematic data collection and analysis instead of requiring exercise controllers and evaluators to rely on personal expertise to estimate the effects of a simulated chemical or biological agent.

*DHS/ODP is conducting a market survey and analysis of both government and commercial off-the-shelf models and simulations. Ongoing results of the survey and analysis are available on the DHS/ODP Web site and secure Web-based portal.*

### **Model**

A model is a physical, mathematical, or otherwise logical representation of a system, entity, phenomenon, or process. Models allow responders to visualize a specific procedure or plan component without actually completing a full response.

### **Simulation**

A simulation is a method for implementing a model over time. For example, a computer program presents responders with a scenario, then follows decision-makers through their response based on their actions at critical moments during the event. Simulation tools can incorporate built-in responses to player decisions, providing players with instant feedback on the outcomes of their choices and the underlying reasons for those results.

As potential threats to national security emerge from an increasingly complex network of challenges, the integration of various training techniques, including the use of models and simulations, can help prepare the emergency response community to respond effectively and expeditiously to terrorist attacks.

### **Evaluation**

The evaluation process for seminars and workshops consists of distributing and reviewing participant feedback forms and producing a seminar or workshop report (described below). All other types of exercises should also require a formal exercise evaluation, AAR, and IP that begin with the exercise planning process and end when the improvements have been implemented and validated through subsequent exercises. The HSEEP exercise and improvement process includes the following eight steps:

- Step 1: Plan and organize the evaluation
- Step 2: Observe the exercise and collect data
- Step 3: Analyze data
- Step 4: Develop a draft AAR
- Step 5: Conduct an After Action Conference
- Step 6: Identify improvements to be implemented
- Step 7: Finalize the AAR/IP
- Step 8: Track implementation

The methods and means to be used to evaluate an exercise should be determined early in the planning process. Complex exercises may necessitate development of an Evaluation Plan (EVALPLAN). Regardless of whether there is an EVALPLAN, the concept of evaluation should be addressed during exercise planning conferences and the following items should be determined:

- Means of evaluation (e.g., EEGs)
- Number of evaluators (e.g., peer review)
- Conduct of debrief and After Action Conference

### **After Action Report**

A draft AAR should be completed within a month of exercise completion. To allow officials sufficient time to review the draft, the exercise planning team should have a draft completed within 3 weeks. An AAR letter of transmittal should inform the Lead Exercise Planner or State Administrative Agency (SAA) official that the review period should not exceed 3 weeks. Once the Lead Exercise Planner has concurred with changes made by the SAA and the exercise planning team, the AAR is approved for publication. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample AAR letter of transmittal.*

Seminar and workshop reports should, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- Rationale (e.g., purpose, goals, objectives)
- Description (e.g., content, structure, venue)
- Outcome discussion (e.g., key issues raised, status of achieving objectives, feedback from participants)
- Next steps (e.g., action items, follow-up activities)

*See HSEEP Volume IV for sample AARs, seminar reports, and workshop reports.*

The Lead Exercise Planner will determine the number of copies of the AAR needed and distribute them to participants. A copy of the final AAR will be provided to the DHS/ODP Exercise Manager.

### **Lessons Learned Information Sharing System**

The recommendations contained within the AAR/IP should be based on lessons learned and best practices, which can then be captured and shared with other communities to enhance preparedness across the country.

DHS/ODP has created a lessons learned and best practices network to collect and disseminate information identified during terrorism exercises and incidents. This network is administered by the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City and is available at <http://www.llis.gov>.

*See HSEEP Volume IV for more information on the Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) system.*

## **Improvement Planning**

Because discussion-based exercises are the building blocks for future exercises, special attention should be paid to post-exercise activities and IP content.

### ***Improvement Plan***

The IP is the means by which the lessons learned from the exercise are converted into concrete, measurable steps that result in improved response capabilities. The IP specifically details the actions that a jurisdiction will take to address each recommendation presented in the draft AAR, who or what agency will be responsible for taking that action, and the timeline for completion. Responsibility for an initial IP should be assigned at the exercise debrief. The final IP is included in the final AAR.

Some improvement actions will require resources to be expended; therefore, the IP should be realistic in its establishment of priorities. Recommendations related to critical tasks (as outlined in HSEEP Volume II) should be given top priority. In the case of discussion-based exercises, it is possible that the IP will identify a need for additional exercises, possibly operations-based exercises. When no resources are available, alternative short- and long-term solutions such as mutual aid agreements should be considered.

### ***After Action Conference***

The After Action Conference should be conducted after the AAR is developed and comments from key personnel are incorporated. The After Action Conference is typically a half-day workshop in which key personnel and the exercise planning team are presented with findings and recommendations from the AAR. A lead facilitator reviews the AAR and asks participants to identify action items that will address the issues and recommendations. Once these action items have been identified, responsibility will be assigned to an individual, an agency, or an organization. Due dates should also be established.

### ***Tracking Implementation***

Once the IP has identified recommendations and action items, and responsibility and due dates have been assigned, the jurisdiction should ensure that each action item is tracked to completion and improvements are implemented.

## Chapter 4. Operations-Based Exercises

Operations-based exercises represent the next stage in the exercise cycle. Operations-based exercises include drills, functional exercises (FEs), and full-scale exercises (FSEs). These types of exercises are used to validate the plans, policies, agreements, and procedures solidified in discussion-based exercises. Operations-based exercises can clarify roles and responsibilities, identify gaps in resources needed to implement plans and procedures, and improve individual and team performances. Common characteristics include actual response, mobilization of apparatus and resources, and commitment of personnel, usually over an extended period of time. These exercises may involve single or multiple agencies or jurisdictions.

### Foundation

It is important to establish a foundation for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating an exercise. To establish this foundation, effective project management is essential. Tasks that must be accomplished include identifying a planning team, scheduling planning conferences, and establishing milestones and a project timeline. Tools for effective project management include charts, timelines, secure Web-based portals, and checklists. *See Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Volume IV for sample project management tools.*

### Exercise Planning Team

The exercise planning team for an operations-based exercise should include representatives from each participating agency or functional area as well as from all necessary logistical support areas. Because input is needed from all of these disciplines, the exercise planning team will be larger than the one needed for a discussion-based exercise. Planning team members need to be especially careful that tasks are properly assigned to one group or individual. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample exercise planning team organizational chart.*

*For large-scale, complex exercises, planning team members should consider the use of a secure, Web-based portal to exchange exercise documents, information, and ideas. This allows users to access documents, provide direct input, and share information and still maintain security. See appendix A for more information on ODP's HSEEP secure Web-based portal.*

### Planning Conferences

Operations-based exercises are typically planned using a minimum of three conferences (Initial Planning Conference [IPC], Mid-Term Planning Conference [MPC], and Final Planning Conference [FPC]). Because a large amount of information is needed to organize an operations-based exercise, jurisdictions are encouraged to schedule as many as five conferences, including a Concept and Objectives (C&O) Meeting and/or a Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) conference, as necessary.

### Project Management Timeline

Operations-based exercises require a much more detailed and organized planning process than discussion-based exercises in order to ensure a high-quality product. A timeline that identifies key planning meeting dates, milestones, and critical tasks should be established by the exercise planning team no later than the conclusion of the IPC. Planners must follow the timeline exactly.

Any changes must be justified to the Lead Exercise Planner, and the entire team should be notified to avoid any confusion.

## Design and Development

### **Exercise Objectives**

Exercise objectives are the cornerstone of design and development. Exercise objectives define specific goals, provide a framework for scenario development, guide development of individual organizational objectives, and provide exercise evaluation criteria. Generally, planners will limit the number of exercise objectives to facilitate design of a reasonable scenario, enable timely exercise execution, and adequately support successful completion of exercise goals. Objectives are initially prepared during concept development; objectives for an operations-based exercise typically focus on integration of multiple entities and systems-level and tactical-level issues. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample operations-based exercise objectives.*

**TIP:** *Predetermining response routes from an assembly area will help reduce the possibility of accidents and liability issues. Directions and maps should be produced and disseminated to players and responders before the exercise.*

### **Scenario**

The scenario for an operations-based exercise should provide background information on the incident catalyst(s) of the exercise. The scenario should be realistic, plausible, and challenging; however, designers should ensure the scenario is not so complicated that it overwhelms participants.

Thought should be given to creating a scenario that potentially involves local incidents and facilities. Findings from a jurisdiction's risk and vulnerability assessment could contribute to scenario development. For example, if the risk and vulnerability assessment identified a critical infrastructure in the community (e.g., refinery, chemical plant) as a vulnerable target, the scenario could describe a terrorist event at that facility. Planning team members should also consider previous real-world incidents and existing plans that have been developed for popular local attractions or large venues.

*One way to conduct an operations-based exercise involving bioterrorism is to hold a point-of-distribution exercise, in which communities can simulate the distribution of pharmaceutical and medical supplies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) can supply training "push packages" for exercises.*

Designers should be cognizant of any sensitivities surrounding scenarios by avoiding the use of actual names associated with known terrorist groups or with selected venues (e.g., school names, private company names).

### **Threat/Hazard**

Operations-based exercises typically use chemical, radiological, nuclear, or explosive hazards in their scenarios. Biological hazard scenarios are not generally associated with an operations-based exercise because of their slowly evolving nature. However, jurisdictions have conducted biological operations-based exercises: an example would be practicing distribution of pharmaceuticals and medications and validating surveillance systems.

## Venue

Much like threat/hazard selection, venue selection should be based on exercise objectives. The venue used to conduct the exercise does not necessarily have to be the same venue described in the exercise scenario. For example, a stadium parking lot may be used to simulate an airport runway.

When selecting an appropriate venue, planners should consider need for the following:

- A large area for response operations during the exercise (e.g., decontamination, triage, treatment, render-safe procedures [RSPs])
- A designated area (either at or near the site) large enough to accommodate the pre-staging or assembly area (described below) for apparatus and equipment
- Minimal disruption to normal everyday services (e.g., traffic, public activities, construction)
- A designated area or room for victim actors to receive instructions before the exercise and, in some instances, to be moulaged to simulate signs and symptoms of hazard exposure
- A designated area for media, observers, and Very Important Persons (VIPs) to view the exercise without interfering with exercise play
- Adequate parking for control staff, media, observers, victim actors, and support staff (e.g., security, canteen)

## Weather

For all exercises, especially those conducted outdoors, a decision should be made to use either real-world weather conditions at the time of the exercise or simulated weather conditions to prompt a certain chain of events. Wind direction and speed typically are simulated so that exercise play can be more easily restrained to one area and response agencies do not have to move their operations (e.g., incident command post, decontamination) every time the wind changes directions.

## Date and Time

In all scenarios, the date and time affect exercise play. Many communities have different population demographics on weekdays, weekends, and holidays, and during special events. Populations and demographics tend to change with the time of day as well. These changes may affect participants' expected actions and can be incorporated into the scenario. For example, when a major sporting event is held at a stadium, it may temporarily increase a jurisdiction's population and change traffic patterns. Evacuation routes or response times may be affected.

*Consider conducting an exercise on a weekend or during night hours to test off-hour resource levels and to minimize disruption to traffic and ongoing operations.*

## Documentation

### Exercise Plan

Exercise Plans (EXPLANs), which are published and distributed prior to the start of an exercise, provide a synopsis of the exercise. In addition to addressing exercise objectives and scope, EXPLANs assign tasks and responsibilities for successful exercise execution. Exercise players and observers generally intend this document for use. The EXPLAN should not contain detailed

scenario information such as the name of the hazard. An EXPLAN typically contains the following sections:

- Purpose/scope/objectives
- Background
- Duration
- Date and time of exercise
- Exercise organization (e.g., director, controllers, evaluators, players)
- Roles and responsibilities
- Rules of conduct
- Safety issues (e.g., real emergency codes/phrases, safety controller responsibilities, prohibited activities such as alcohol and drug use)
- Logistics (e.g., parking, assembly area, transportation, restrooms, food/water)
- Security and access (e.g., identification/badges)
- Communications (e.g., radio frequencies/channels)
- Schedule of events (e.g., briefings, start and end of exercise)
- Maps and directions

*See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample EXPLAN.*

#### **Controller/Evaluator Handbook**

Controller and Evaluator Handbooks (C/E Handbooks) supplement EXPLANs and contain more detailed information about the exercise scenario. They also describe the roles and responsibilities of exercise controllers and evaluators. Because the C/E Handbook contains information about the scenario and about exercise administration, it should be distributed to only those individuals specifically designated as controllers or evaluators. In addition to containing the same information as the EXPLAN, the C/E Handbook usually contains the following sections:

- Detailed scenario information (including agent fact sheets)
- Roles and responsibilities of functional area or individual controllers and evaluators
- Exercise safety plan
- Controller communications plan
- Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs)

*See HSEEP Volume IV for samples of a C/E Handbook and EEGs.*

#### **Evaluation Plan**

Evaluation Plans (EVALPLANs) provide evaluation staff with guidance and instructions on evaluation or observation methodology to be used as well as essential materials required to execute their specific functions. During larger, more complex exercises, planners may develop an EVALPLAN in lieu of, or in addition to, a C/E Handbook. The EVALPLAN is a limited distribution document that evaluators use in conjunction with the EXPLAN and the MSEL. Level of detail varies and can include the following:

- Exercise overview

- Evaluation control organization
- Evaluation methodology and observation techniques
- Evaluator roles and responsibilities
- Evaluation communications plan

*More information on the EVALPLAN and the evaluation process can be found in HSEEP Volume II.*

### **Control Staff Instructions**

Control Staff Instructions (COSIN) documents contain guidance that controllers, simulators, and evaluators need concerning procedures and responsibilities for exercise control, simulation, and support. COSINs typically are developed for large-scale, complex exercises that require more coordination among control staff. The purpose of a COSIN is to:

- Provide scenario details
- Develop guidelines for control and simulation support
- Explain the exercise concept as it relates to controllers and simulators
- Establish management structure for these activities
- Establish and define the control structure's communication, logistics, and administration

### **Master Scenario Events List**

An MSEL contains a chronological listing of the events and injects that drive exercise play. The MSEL links simulation to action, enhances exercise experience for players, and reflects an incident or activity that will prompt players to implement the policy or procedure being tested. Each MSEL record contains:

- Designated scenario time
- Event synopsis
- Controller responsible for delivering inject, with controller/evaluator special instructions (if applicable)
- Expected action (player response expected after an MSEL inject is delivered)
- Intended player (agency or individual player for whom the MSEL inject is intended)
- Objective to be demonstrated (if applicable)
- Notes section (for controllers and evaluators to track actual events against those listed in the MSEL, with special instructions for individual controllers and evaluators)

Times listed in an MSEL should reflect the time an inject should occur. These times should be as realistic as possible and should be based on input from functional area representatives. For example, to determine when triage and treatment should be established during the exercise, solicit input from emergency medical services (EMS) or a hospital representative. If the activity occurs sooner than anticipated, the time should be noted but play should not be interrupted.

There are three types of injects:

**Contextual injects** are introduced to a player by a controller to help build the contemporary operating environment. For example, if the exercise objectives include information sharing, an

MSEL inject can be developed to direct a controller to select an actor to portray a suspect. The inject could then instruct the controller to prompt another actor to approach a law enforcement officer and inform him/her that this person was behaving suspiciously.

**Expected action events** represent expected actions that would normally take place during this type of incident. For example, during an FSE involving a chemical agent, establishment of decontamination is an expected action.

**Contingency injects** are events that should be verbally indicated to a player by a controller if they do not take place. For example, if a simulated secondary device is placed at an incident scene but is not discovered, a controller may want to prompt an actor to approach a player/first responder and say that he/she witnessed suspicious activity close to the device location. This should prompt the discovery of the device by the responder, and result in subsequent notification of law enforcement (perhaps, specifically, the bomb squad).

MSELs are typically produced in two formats, short and long. Short MSELs list the inject, the time, a short description, the responsible controller, and a player. These can be used as a quick reference guide during exercise play. Long MSELs are used when greater detail is necessary; they include more detailed descriptions, exact quotes for simulation cell (SIMCELL) injects, and descriptions of expected actions.

Message injects are typically used in exercises that involve multiple simulated activities. These messages are typically delivered via a SIMCELL and are used to simulate the actions, activities, and conversations of an individual, agency, or organization that is not participating in the exercise but that would likely be actively involved during a real event. For example, in an exercise with limited scope, the State Governor's office may not be playing. To simulate the activities of the Governor's office during an emergency event, a message can be scripted to simulate notification of the mayor by the Governor. That message can be delivered by phone through the SIMCELL. This script or message inject should be read by a simulator acting on behalf of the Governor's office.

*When reading message injects, simulators should be as realistic and emotional as possible.*

### **Procedural Flow**

Procedural Flows (PROFLOWS) outline a sequential flow of actions anticipated from participating organizations in response to a hypothetical situation. Typically, they are produced for national- and international-level exercises to describe the procedures of departments and agencies that may or may not be published elsewhere. The PROFLOW allows controllers and evaluators to track and monitor expected actions to ensure their completion at designated times. The PROFLOW differs from the MSEL in that it contains only expected player actions (e.g., establishment of decontamination, triage, treatment, transport). The MSEL, on the other hand, is a comprehensive tool that contains expected actions and controller injects that prompt or initiate certain events.

### **Exercise Evaluation Guides**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP), has developed EEGs to assist with exercise evaluation. These guides incorporate the critical tasks

that should be completed during an exercise. They were developed for use by both experienced exercise evaluators and by practitioners who are subject matter experts (SMEs) but who have little or no exercise evaluation experience. Each EEG provides evaluators with information on what they should expect to hear discussed, space to record their observations, and questions to consider after the exercise (as the first step in the analysis process).

Each EEG can be used by one individual evaluator assigned to observe individual tasks or groups of tasks. During the analysis phase, evaluators combine their observations with those of the other evaluators. They reconstruct events, and analyze outcomes and interactions across agencies, disciplines, and jurisdictions to achieve broad mission outcomes. The responsible team (agency or discipline), function, jurisdiction, and mission outcome are indicated on the EEG to facilitate analysis. *See HSEEP Volume II for more information on EEGs. See HSEEP Volumes II and IV for sample EEGs.*

### **Controller and Evaluator Packets**

Prior to an exercise, controllers and evaluators should receive the materials that they need to carry out their responsibilities. These materials can be extracted from the more detailed information found in the C/E Handbook or the COSIN.

A controller packet should contain:

- Essential C/E Handbook or COSIN information (e.g., scenario and threat/hazard information, communications, safety, exercise staff organization)
- MSEL (including injects for each responsible controller)
- Maps/directions

An evaluator packet should contain:

- Essential C/E Handbook or COSIN information (e.g., scenario and threat/hazard information, communications, safety, exercise staff organization)
- MSEL/PROFLOW (including injects for each responsible controller)
- EEGs
- Maps/directions

These materials should be placed in a packet (e.g., folder, notebook) for ease of use during the exercise.

## **Exercise Site Areas**

### **Response Route**

The response route is the path traveled by responding emergency units to a simulated incident. This route should be clearly marked and free of traffic that is unrelated to the exercise. It should lead from the assembly area to the exercise site.

### **Response Area**

The response area is a large space where operations take place (e.g., decontamination, triage, treatment, RSP).

**Parking**

Established parking areas should be clearly labeled for use by observers, media, actors, controllers, and evaluators. Law enforcement personnel should be on hand to help direct vehicles to their proper parking areas.

**Registration**

No unauthorized personnel should be allowed into the site; everyone associated with the exercise should register. All individuals should register immediately upon arrival at the exercise site and receive a badge. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample sign-in sheets and badges.*

**Assembly Area**

The assembly area is an essential element of an operations-based exercise: it is the gathering place for deployable resources prior to the start of the exercise. All response units are dispatched from this area, thus all personnel, organizations, and resources who are playing and responding to the primary incident site (where the triggering event takes place) should report to the assembly area. All participants who are playing at offsite locations (e.g., hospitals, Emergency Operations Centers [EOCs]) should report to the areas designated by their respective organizations.

More than one assembly area may be established if the exercise involves multiple sites or events. In a real event, units would be dispatched from various locations and arrive at different times. However, in an exercise, the assembly area provides a safe location in close proximity to the exercise from which units can be sent directly to the site, allowing actual response times to be mimicked in a low-risk environment. The assembly area should not be confused with a staging area, which may be established by IC to stage units before their arrival on the scene.

The onsite Assembly Area Controller should remain in close communication with other controllers throughout the exercise to ensure the safe and realistic dispatch of units. The Assembly Area Controller is responsible for the logistical organization of the assembly area, including placement locations for units and coordination of exiting patterns for dispatched units. Excellent organization of this area is critical to exercise success. It is imperative, therefore, for the planning team to create a deployment timetable based on realistic response times from a unit's or agency's home station or office. Failure to do so will result in a compromised and disorganized exercise. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample deployment timetable.*

The Assembly Area Controller must be informed about any updates to the exercise that may require changes to the deployment timetable. Should such changes be required, the Assembly Area Controller will update the deployment timetable. When the most current information is used, appropriate units will be dispatched and arrive on schedule, allowing the remainder of the exercise to proceed smoothly and realistically.

When a unit arrives at the assembly area, the controller should "take attendance" to ensure all players are present. Units should be positioned according to their deployment times. In accordance with DHS/ODP weapons policy, a weapons check must be performed by qualified individual(s) to guarantee the tagging of all inspected weapons to indicate they are safe for exercise play.

Approximately 15 to 30 minutes before the start of exercise play, the Assembly Area Controller should conduct a briefing for all players to address individual roles and responsibilities, exercise parameters, safety, badges, and any remaining logistical exercise concerns or questions. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample assembly area player briefing.*

Measures should be in place to ensure the simulation of real-world response times. When dispatched, units should not leave the assembly area until directed to do so. Units will be released based on a realistic response time from their home station to the incident site. If units are not requested or deployed according to the deployment timetable, the Assembly Area Controller should notify and coordinate the deployments with the Exercise Director. Because personnel may be gathered in the assembly area for a significant amount of time prior to dispatch, it is important to have provisions, such as potable water and restrooms, available. Following the exercise, controllers should ensure that appropriate players attend the post-exercise hot wash in their respective functional area.

#### **Observer/Media Area**

If observers and media are invited to an exercise, they should be directed to a designated area that provides them with a view of exercise play. This designated area serves as a means to keep observers and media from interfering with exercise play. It should be adjacent to the exercise site but should not allow interference with response routes or egress points. Because many jurisdictions prefer to keep operations of groups such as special weapons and tactics teams, bomb squads, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams confidential, these activities could take place some distance from the observer/media area.

#### **Simulation Cell**

A SIMCELL is used to generate injects and receive player responses to nonparticipating agencies. For example, if IC requests the closure of air space around an incident site, the SIMCELL would receive the call rather than the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The SIMCELL also provides information in place of a non-participating agency. For example, if the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is not participating, the SIMCELL may be used to simulate communication to and from the FBI Strategic Information Operations Center.

Physically, the SIMCELL is a working location for a number of qualified professionals who portray non-participating organizations, agencies, and individuals who would likely participate actively in response to an actual event. Depending on the type of exercise, the SIMCELL may require a phone, fax machine, computer, e-mail account, or other means of communication.

#### **Actors**

Volunteer victim actors are an important part of an operations-based exercise. They provide added realism and force participants to provide simulated victim care. Recruiting victim actors is one of the biggest challenges of any operations-based exercise. As soon as the planning team determines the total number of actors needed, team members should begin recruiting from local sources.

*Drama students, police and fire academy recruits, nursing students, and military personnel often make excellent victim actors. Some victim actors can receive volunteer service credit for participating in an event that benefits first responders and the entire community.*

**Sources**

Exercise planning team members can recruit victim actors from local colleges and universities, drama clubs, theaters, civic groups, emergency response academies, medical classes, and Federal/State military units. Potential actors should inform exercise staff of any pre-existing conditions, such as pregnancy or diabetes, that may require special treatment or conditions.

**Waiver Forms**

Each victim actor should receive a waiver form prior to the day of the exercise. Signing this form waives liability for all exercise planners and participants. Jurisdictions should use discretion when recruiting actors under the age of 18 because of additional challenges and concerns related to liability, maturity, and emotional reactions. If the event requires volunteers younger than age 18, parents or legal guardians should sign their waiver forms. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample actor waiver form.*

**Actor Instructions**

Volunteers should receive their instructions prior to the day of the exercise. These instructions should tell volunteers about any special considerations, such as:

- Wear old clothing because clothing could possibly get cut or ripped
- Wear a bathing suit under outer garments because the decontamination process could be wet
- Eat prior to attending the exercise
- Expect a long, tiring day
- Do not wear expensive clothing or jewelry
- Tell the victim actor coordinator about preexisting conditions

Victim actor instructions should also include information on when to arrive, where to report, and whether a meal will be provided during or after the exercise. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample actor instructions.*

**Symptomology Cards**

Each victim actor should be provided with a unique symptomology card containing the signs and symptoms the actor will portray, as well as information for medical providers. The victim actor coordinator or his/her staff should explain these cards to victim actors before the exercise and answer any questions. Victim actors will be instructed to keep these cards with them at all times during the exercise, and to not step out of character except in the event of a real emergency.

These cards should, at a minimum, include:

- Vital signs (e.g., blood pressure, respiration)
- Symptoms (e.g., dizziness, pain, nausea)
- Trauma injuries (e.g., lacerations, wounds, broken legs)
- Acting instructions (e.g., disorientation, emotional distress)
- Special needs (e.g., language barriers, physical limitations)

### **Moulage**

Moulage is makeup applied to victim actors to add realism to an exercise. It includes fake blood, plastic bones, and any other makeup that helps a victim actor emulate the signs and symptoms on his/her symptomology card. Although not required, moulage is encouraged at all operations-based exercises. School drama clubs, military units, community theaters, the American Red Cross, and morticians are common resources for moulage staff.

*Simulants can be placed on actors' skin and clothes before the exercise to allow responders to see actual evidence of agent contamination. Ultraviolet lighting can be used to expose fluorescent stimulant.*

### **Water/Food**

Water should be provided to all victim actors at all operations-based exercises. It is important that victim actors do not become dehydrated. If an exercise exceeds 4 hours, a meal, usually a box lunch, should be provided. Victim actors should receive instructions on how to get water and meals. Ideally, water should be placed at designated stations throughout the exercise site, or bottles of water should be on hand for distribution.

### **Transportation**

If victim actors are transported offsite, round trip transportation should be coordinated before the exercise starts. Victims should have transportation back to their vehicles at the conclusion of the exercise.

*A great way to transport victim actors from the primary incident scene to offsite hospitals is to use a bus that could also simulate ambulance transport.*

### **Self Referrals**

Some hospitals may wish to practice handling self-referred victims or worried-well patients. In those cases, the number of patients each hospital will receive and the method of transport to these hospitals should be predetermined. Victim actors portraying self-referring victims should be pre-staged at the appropriate hospital(s) prior to the start of the exercise and must be monitored for safety, food, and water.

### **Hospital/Victim Breakdown**

In exercises with hospital participation, which hospitals will receive victim actors should be determined prior to the exercise. This breakdown should include:

- Total number of patients each hospital will receive, by severity (e.g., walking wounded, severe, moderate, trauma)
- Number of actors that will be transported from the primary incident site to each hospital
- Number of self-referring patients
- Special considerations (e.g., pediatric/geriatric, language barriers)
- Number of actors that will be prestaged (generally self-referrals) at each hospital

This breakdown should be taken into consideration when making transportation arrangements. See *HSEEP Volume IV* for a sample hospital/victim breakdown list.

## **Media/Public Information**

### **Public Information/Press Release**

Prior to each exercise, the planning team should develop a written release to be disseminated to media outlets. This release informs the media (and the public) about general exercise information (e.g., location, date). Prior to an operations-based exercise, it is particularly important to release information that may impact normal public activities or may cause citizens to believe a disaster have actually occurred.

Additionally, this information can be distributed to observers and senior officials (e.g., VIPs, management). The document should not contain detailed scenario information, such as the hazard or venue, or any information that could hinder exercise outcome if read by a participant.

Typically, the contents of an exercise public information/press release should include:

- Introduction:
  - Sponsoring agency
  - Program information
  - Expected outcomes
- Purpose
- Scope and duration
- General scenario (e.g., location, goals, objectives)
- Participating agencies, grouped by locality and functional area

*See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample public information/media release.*

### **Public Announcement**

Prior to any operations-based exercise, announcements should be made to the public. This precaution will alleviate any confusion on the part of passing motorists or pedestrians. It will also help the public avoid congestion near the exercise site by providing suggestions for alternate routes. Announcements can be made on local television or radio, in local newspapers, through mass mailings or pamphlets, and/or on signs near the exercise site. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample public announcement.*

### **Media Policy**

During operations-based exercises, media may be allowed to film certain activities but should be cautioned not to interfere with exercise play. Unless media is invited to participate in the exercise, a guide (typically a Public Information Officer [PIO] or designee) should escort media at all times.

## **Site Logistics**

### **Badging/Identification**

For security purposes, all exercise participants should wear some form of identification. Although players may wear their response uniforms, all other participants (e.g., controllers, evaluators, actors, observers/VIPs, support staff) should be clearly identified. This identification is usually accomplished through a color-coded system of badges and hats. Badges and hats

should be distributed before conducting the exercise, perhaps during registration or briefings. Player/responders should receive information about the forms of identification they will see at the exercise play area and what each color represents.

### **Restrooms**

Restrooms should be available to all individuals involved in an exercise. Facilities should include portable and/or permanent restrooms at the assembly area and the exercise play area.

### **Canteen/Water/Food**

At a minimum, water should be available to all individuals present during exercise conduct. If an exercise exceeds 4 hours in length, a meal, usually a box lunch, should be available to victim actors, participants, controllers, and evaluators. Victim actors should be instructed to eat prior to arriving at the exercise.

*Local American Red Cross and Salvation Army chapters are excellent sources for canteen supplies (food and refreshments) as well as blankets for decontaminated actors. Some communities have received donated water and food from private companies (e.g., soda distributors, fast food chains).*

### **Communications**

Prior to an exercise, a radio frequency or designated exercise channel should be identified for player/responder use. The selected frequency should not interfere with normal operations that are outside the scope of the exercise. All radio and/or telephone conversations with players, either at the primary incident site or at an off-site location, should begin with the phrase, “This is an exercise.”

In addition, a separate radio frequency should be assigned for use by controllers when coordinating exercise logistics, updating exercise status, and relaying information on real emergencies, if necessary. Handheld radios should be provided to all controllers prior to an exercise.

### **Videotaping**

Because of security concerns, it is important for the exercise planning team to determine which parts of an exercise, if any, will be videotaped. If there is a videotaping team, members should be clearly identified with badges, vests, or other forms of identification that allow them free reign in the exercise play area. This team should not be confused with members of the media.

### **Props/Devices**

Props and devices can add realism to an exercise and also can test responder awareness. Frequently, jurisdictions use decoy secondary devices to test first responders’ recognition skills. Devices such as flash bangs, smoke machines, and sprayers; and props such as auto wreckage and debris can be used to initiate an event. However, these items require logistical considerations to ensure participant safety. More information on props and devices is provided in the Exercise Enhancement section.

### **Site Security**

Because of the sensitive nature of exercises, and because exercises themselves may become targets, it is important for the exercise site to be secure. Local law enforcement should provide

site security. Site security personnel are the only individuals involved with the exercise who should remain armed.

### **Weapons Check/Policy**

It is DHS/ODP policy that all exercises have a written weapons policy in place prior to exercise conduct. In accordance with DHS/ODP policy, qualified individual(s) must perform a weapons check to clear all inspected weapons. These weapons will be clearly marked to indicate they are safe for use in exercise play. All players, with the exception of site security personnel, should adhere to this policy. *See HSEEP Volume IV for DHS/ODP weapons policy.*

### **Safety**

Safety is one of the most important considerations in conducting an exercise. The following safety issues should be addressed:

- Identify a Safety Controller (not to be confused with a Safety Officer designated by IC)
- Dedicate advanced life support or basic life support ambulance unit(s) for real-world emergencies only
- Identify real-world emergency procedures with a code word or phrase
- Identify safety requirements (e.g., establish policies on alcohol/drug use, medications, personal protective equipment [PPE])
- Consider other safety issues (e.g., weather, heat stress, hypothermia, fire/pyrotechnics, weapons, animals/K–9s, use of force)

*A great training opportunity for many communities involves including a National Guard Civil Support Team (CST) in an operations-based exercise. Fully operational CSTs have dedicated resources and the capability to (among other things) detect and identify agents and perform interoperable communication. Although their response times can vary, for the purposes of the exercise, the CST deployment time can be artificially compressed to allow the team to play. In addition, the CST can arrive the day before the exercise to conduct a training seminar (usually after the C/E briefing) to educate the community on its capabilities.*

### **Conduct**

#### **Exercise Participants**

##### **Players**

Players are agency personnel who perform their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Communications (e.g., dispatch, EOC) personnel who may be offsite but who have an integral role in directing agency responses and actions are also players. Players initiate actions that control and mitigate the simulated emergency.

*Some communities include venue employees (e.g., stadium concessionaires, security guards) as planning team members and/or players or support staff during exercise conduct (to practice internal procedures such as notification and evacuation).*

##### **Controllers**

Controllers are exercise participants who plan and manage exercise play, set up and operate the exercise incident site, and act in the roles of response individuals and agencies not actually playing in the exercise. Controllers give key data to players and may prompt or initiate certain

player actions (as listed in the MSEL/PROFLOW) to ensure exercise continuity. Controllers are the only participants who should provide information or direction to players. All controllers should be accountable to a Senior Controller. A controller may also serve as an evaluator.

### **Evaluators**

Evaluators are chosen from various agencies to evaluate and comment on designated functional areas. Evaluators are chosen based on their expertise in the functional area(s) they review, and, have a passive role. They only note the actions of players and do not interfere with exercise flow.

### **Actors**

Actors are volunteer exercise participants who simulate specific roles during exercise play. An actor also may serve as an evaluator or as a simulator acting on behalf of an agency or organization not playing in an exercise. Individuals acting as simulators are usually placed in a SIMCELL to inject messages via phone, fax, or e-mail.

### **Observers**

Observers view all or selected portions of exercise play. Observers do not participate in exercise play or in exercise control functions.

### **Briefings**

Held prior to an exercise, briefings educate participants about their roles and responsibilities. By scheduling separate briefings for controllers and evaluators, actors, and players on site and off site, planning team members can avoid giving extraneous material to different groups. Presentations should accompany most of these briefings. Subsequent debriefs then provide an opportunity to review general exercise proceedings after the exercise is completed.

### **Controller/Evaluator Briefing**

The C/E briefing is generally conducted the day before an operations-based exercise. It begins with an exercise overview and then covers location and area, schedule of events, scenario, control concept, controller and evaluator responsibilities, and any miscellaneous information. This briefing generally lasts 1 to 2 hours. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample C/E briefing.*

### **Hospital Briefing**

The hospital briefing is generally conducted the day before an operations-based exercise for participating hospital controllers and evaluators. It is used to review communications between the exercise site and hospitals, notification procedures, schedule of events, scenario, controller and evaluator responsibilities, actor issues, and any miscellaneous information. This briefing generally lasts 1 to 2 hours. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample hospital briefing.*

### **Actor Briefing**

The actor briefing is generally conducted the morning of the exercise, prior to the victim actors taking their positions on the exercise field. The victim actor coordinator should lead this briefing and include the following information: exercise overview, safety, what to do in the event of an actual emergency, symptomology, acting instructions, and schedule. Identification badges and symptomology cards should be distributed before or during this briefing. If moulage is to be

applied to actors, it should be completed before the briefing. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample actor briefing.*

### **Observer Briefing**

An observer briefing informs exercise observers about program background, scenario, schedule of events, observer limitations, and any other miscellaneous information. Many times, observers will be unfamiliar with public safety procedures and will have questions about the activities they see. Designating someone (such as a response agency PIO) to answer questions will prevent observers from asking questions of participants, controllers, or evaluators. The observer briefing is generally conducted the day of an exercise and lasts 1 hour.

### **Player Hot Wash**

The player hot wash occurs immediately following the exercise and allows responders to provide immediate feedback. It enables controllers and evaluators to capture information about events while everything is still fresh in players' minds. It also allows them to ascertain level of satisfaction with the exercise, identify issues or concerns, and propose items for improvement. Each functional area should conduct its own hot wash, which should be facilitated by the lead controller for that area. Players should complete and submit their feedback forms during the hot wash. All evaluators will take notes for later compilation during play and hot washes in their functional areas. Information from the participant feedback forms will be used to help generate the After Action Report (AAR). Attendance lists will be collected and secured by the Lead Exercise Planner. *See HSEEP Volume IV for sample feedback forms.*

### **Controller/Evaluator Debrief**

The C/E debrief provides a forum for functional area controllers and evaluators to review the exercise. This debrief features a facilitated discussion and provides each controller and evaluator with an opportunity to provide an overview of the functional area they observed and to discuss both strengths and areas for improvement. During the debrief, controllers and evaluators should complete and submit their EEGs and feedback forms. This debrief should be facilitated by the Lead Exercise Planner or Exercise Director. Debrief results will be captured for inclusion in the AAR. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample C/E debrief.*

### **Hospital Debrief**

This debrief is generally conducted the day after the exercise, and enables hospital representatives to assess the medical community's response. It features a facilitated discussion covering each hospital's experience during the incident. During the debriefing, controllers and evaluators should complete and submit their EEGs and feedback forms. This debrief should be facilitated by the Exercise Director or Lead Hospital Controller. Results should be captured for inclusion in the AAR. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample hospital debrief.*

### **Exercise Enhancement**

Enhanced exercises provide a realistic scenario or field environment and add an increased level of learning potential for participants. Enhancements can range from using scenarios based on detailed research on a specific chemical hazard (e.g., toxicity, volatility, dissemination methods) to providing props such as explosion debris, mannequins, smoke, or moulaged victims. The following paragraphs detail some operations-based exercise enhancements.

**Props**

Props are non-functional replications of objects, the presence or discovery of which requires certain actions by exercise players. Examples include simulated bombs, bomb blast debris (shrapnel), mannequins or body parts, and foam bricks and beams. Simulants that mimic the effects of chemical hazards or that cause a positive reading of an actual detection device are also considered props. Reading simulated prop text is a suitable method of providing detailed, scripted information. However, reading a prop copy of a local newspaper that includes a scripted article related to the exercise scenario is an effective way to enhance what might otherwise be a bland message.

**Equipment**

When feasible, it is more desirable to use real equipment than simulated props. Using real equipment has the added effect of familiarizing personnel with their tools of the trade. For example, emergency medical technician (EMT) staff will derive more benefits from completing medical triage tags than from stating what they would do if they had triage tags. However, when players treat victim actors, they must use noninvasive equipment (e.g., no needles, no intubations).

**Personnel**

Using actual team members and victim actors is essential for exercise realism. Teams that consistently train and practice together tend to respond more effectively and cohesively. Every effort should be made to incorporate existing teams into the exercise as players. For example, include hazardous materials (HazMat) and bomb squads; disaster medical assistance teams; and evidence response, special reaction, and hostage negotiation teams. Using actors as victims enhances realism for all response staff who interact directly with them. Soliciting volunteers from the local jurisdiction helps develop a sense of community and assures community members that their first responders are well-trained.

**Special Effects**

A special effect is a technical enhancement that typically requires trained and licensed personnel, special permission for use, and additional safety and/or security precautions. Examples include the employment of pyrotechnics or explosives, or the use of makeup specialists. Moulage is a special effect technique often performed by local personnel with some training.

**Exercise Play Rules**

Exercise play rules establish the parameters that participants will follow. These rules describe appropriate behavior for participants when physical contact is necessary or when participant actions become overemotional or excessive. Rules are established in advance of the exercise to provide opposing sides, such as a barricaded hostage taker and law enforcement personnel, with a safety net to prevent physical harm to individuals or damage to property.

Rules are particularly important when an opposing force, such as a mock terrorist cell, is used in exercise play. Detailed safety measures and control of opposing force activities are required during all facets of an exercise.

In all cases when opposing force or victim actor play is involved, written rules will be provided in advance to all parties. These rules should first be reviewed and approved by appropriate authorities.

## **Drills**

A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually employed to validate a specific operation or function in a single agency or organization. Drills are commonly used to provide training on new equipment, develop or test new policies or procedures, or practice and maintain current skills. Drills are narrow in scope and typically focus on a specific aspect of an operation. For example, drills are appropriate for assessing response time to an alarm, checking the ability of a guard to use a metal detector, or determining if a 911 operator can appropriately direct a call reporting suspicious behavior that may involve terrorism. Drills can be used to determine if plans can be executed as designed, to assess whether more training is required, or to reinforce best practices.

In addition to being useful as a stand-alone tool, a series of individual agency drills can also be used to prepare several agencies to collaborate in a FSE. For example, plans for a FSE may involve a response to a simulated radiological dispersal device detonation that results in radioactively contaminated mass casualties and a crime scene. Preparatory drills for this exercise might include:

- A decontamination drill for firefighters and EMTs to practice and demonstrate decontamination procedures
- A “hot line” management drill for law enforcement officials and firefighters to practice investigation and collection of evidence in a radioactive environment
- A hospital triage drill to practice receiving potentially contaminated patients

Typical attributes of drills include:

- Narrow focus, results measured against established standards
- Instant feedback
- Realistic environment
- Performance in isolation
- Preparation for exercises that are larger in scope (i.e., full-scale exercise)

For every drill, clearly defined plans, policies, and procedures need to be in place. Personnel need to be familiar with those plans and policies, and to be trained in the processes and procedures to be drilled.

A drill may start with brief remarks by the Lead Exercise Planner. Once controllers and evaluators are properly stationed, the drill begins. If no safety issues arise, the drill continues until the process is complete, time expires, or objectives are achieved. During the event, participants must know that they are participating in a drill and not an actual event.

Controllers ensure that participant behavior remains within predefined boundaries and that entities not involved in the drill (but who would be involved in an actual event) do not respond.

Evaluators observe behaviors and compare them against established plans, policies, procedures, and standard practices (if applicable). Safety controllers ensure all activity takes place within a safe environment.

### **Functional Exercises**

FEs, also known as command post exercises (CPXs), are single or multiagency activities designed to analyze and evaluate agency capabilities, multiple functions and/or sub-functions, or interdependent groups of functions. FEs focus on exercising plans, policies, procedures, and staffs involved in management, direction, command, and control functions (e.g., IC/Unified Command [UC], EOC). Events are projected through a scripted exercise scenario with built-in flexibility that allows updates to drive activity at the management level. FEs are conducted in a realistic, real-time environment; however, movement of personnel and equipment is simulated.

The objective of an FE is to execute specific plans and procedures in response to an event, and to apply established policies, plans, and procedures under crisis conditions. FEs simulate the reality of operations in a functional area by presenting complex and realistic problems that require critical thinking, rapid problem solving, and effective response in a highly stressful environment by trained personnel from a particular function team. Typical FE attributes include:

- Performance analysis
- Management evaluation of EOCs, command posts, headquarters, and staff
- Inspection of established policies and procedures that pertain to the scenario
- Measurement of adequacy, appropriation, and acquisition of resources
- Examination of inter-jurisdictional relationships
- Use of an MSEL as the primary tool that drives exercise play

To create an effective environment, the exercise planning team should represent the real world with respect to potential areas of play. Agency and player actions must be anticipated, and information resources must be identified and assembled. As with other types of operations-based exercises, the exercise planning team must ensure that entities not involved with the exercise (but who would be involved in a real event) do not respond.

Briefing and training of controllers and evaluators should be accomplished prior to the exercise date. This briefing and training should be long enough to allow for questions and a visit to the exercise site. Controllers and evaluators should be able to meet each other and determine where they will be located during the exercise. Controllers should be briefed on their responsibilities and the rules of engagement, and evaluators should become familiar with exercise objectives, exercise forms, and the reporting process. Controllers and evaluators should find positions for themselves where they can observe actions but avoid impeding exercise play.

Except in the event of adverse weather conditions, thorough planning should allow an exercise to begin on time. Security should be in place at least 2 hours before the exercise starts.

Controllers, evaluators, observers, and media should be in place sufficiently early to allow the exercise to start on time. Observers and media should remain in their assigned areas throughout the exercise (unless escorted by an official). PIOs should be available to interpret actions and/or

provide briefings to observers and media, as appropriate. During the FE, participants must know that they are participating in an exercise, not an actual incident.

FE controllers use an MSEL to ensure participant behavior remains within predefined boundaries. Controllers in the SIMCELL will inject scenario elements to simulate real events. Evaluators will observe behaviors and compare them against established plans, policies, procedures, and standard practices (if applicable), as well as against the timeline set forth in the MSEL. Safety controllers will ensure all activity takes place within a safe environment.

Although the exercise may have a time limit, it is best if the end of the exercise occurs after exercise objectives have been met and all required functions are completed to the satisfaction of the Exercise Director and/or the exercise planning team.

### **Full-Scale Exercise**

FSEs are typically the most complex and resource intensive type of exercise. These multiagency, multijurisdictional exercises test many facets of emergency response and recovery. They include many first responders operating under an Incident Command System (ICS) or Unified Command System (UCS) to effectively and efficiently respond to, and initiate recovery from, an incident. An FSE focuses on implementing and analyzing the plans, policies, and procedures developed in discussion-based exercises and honed in previous, smaller operations-based exercises. Events are projected through a scripted exercise scenario that has built-in flexibility to allow updates to drive activity. The FSE is conducted in a real-time, stressful environment that closely mirrors a real event. First responders and resources are mobilized and deployed to the scene where they conduct their actions as if a real incident had occurred (with a few minor exceptions). The FSE simulates reality by presenting complex and realistic problems involving operations in multiple functional areas that require critical thinking, rapid problem solving, and effective responses by trained personnel in a highly stressful environment.

Typical FSE attributes include:

- Mobilization of units, personnel, and equipment
- Use of established policies and procedures (as they pertain to the scenario)
- Measurement of adequacy, appropriation, and acquisition of resources
- Examination of inter-jurisdictional relationships
- Performance analysis

The level of support needed to conduct an FSE is greater than needed for other types of exercises. The exercise site for an FSE is usually vast, and site logistics require close monitoring. Safety issues, including those surrounding the use of props and special effects, must be monitored. Throughout the duration of the exercise, many activities occur simultaneously.

Controllers and evaluators should meet together prior to the exercise (possibly during the C/E briefing) to determine their locations during the exercise. Controllers should be briefed on their responsibilities, rules of exercise play, and use of the MSEL or other tools. Evaluators should be familiar with exercise objectives, forms, and the reporting process. Controllers and

evaluators should find positions for themselves where they can observe exercise activity but be as unobtrusive as possible.

Except in the event of adverse weather conditions, thorough planning should allow an exercise to begin on time. Security should be in place at least 2 hours before the start. Controllers, evaluators, observers, and media should be in place sufficiently early to allow the exercise to start on time. Observers and media should remain in their assigned areas throughout the exercise (unless escorted by an official). PIOs should be available to interpret actions and/or provide briefings to observers and media, as appropriate. During the FSE, participants must know that they are participating in an exercise, not an actual incident.

Controllers ensure participant behavior takes place within predefined boundaries and that entities not involved in the exercise (but who would be involved in the actual event) do not respond. SIMCELL controllers will inject scenario elements to simulate real events. Evaluators will observe behaviors and compare them against established plans, policies, procedures, and standard practices (if applicable). Safety controllers will ensure all activity takes place within a safe environment.

Although the exercise may have a time limit, it is best if the end of the exercise occurs after exercise objectives have been met and all required functions are completed to the satisfaction of the Exercise Director and/or the exercise planning team.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation process for all operations-based exercises should include a formal exercise evaluation, integrated analysis, and the AAR/IP. This process begins during exercise planning and ends when improvements have been implemented and validated through subsequent exercises. The HSEEP process includes the following eight steps:

- Step 1: Plan and organize the evaluation
- Step 2: Observe the exercise and collect data
- Step 3: Analyze data
- Step 4: Develop the draft AAR
- Step 5: Conduct an exercise debrief
- Step 6: Identify improvements to be implemented
- Step 7: Finalize the AAR
- Step 8: Track implementation

*See HSEEP Volume II for more information on evaluation, AARs, and improvement planning.*

## **After Action Report**

A draft AAR should be completed within 30 days of exercise conclusion. To allow sufficient time for review, the exercise planning team should have the draft completed within 3 weeks. The AAR transmittal letter informs the Lead Exercise Planner or SAA official that his/her review period should not exceed 3 weeks. Once the Lead Exercise Planner concurs with all changes, the AAR is approved for publication. *See HSEEP Volume IV for a sample AAR letter of transmittal.*

The Lead Exercise Planner will determine the number of copies of the AAR needed and distribute them to participants. A copy of the final AAR must be provided to the DHS/ODP Exercise Manager. *See HSEEP Volume II for more information on AARs and for a sample format.*

### ***Lessons Learned Information Sharing***

The recommendations contained in the AAR/IP should be based on lessons learned and best practices, which can then be captured and shared with other communities to enhance preparedness across the country.

DHS/ODP has created a lessons learned and best practices network to collect and disseminate information on lessons learned and best practices identified through terrorism exercises and incidents. This network is administered by the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City and is available at <http://www.llis.dhs.gov>.

*See HSEEP Volume IV for more information on the Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) system.*

### **Improvement Planning**

Operations-based exercises offer jurisdictions a unique opportunity to examine the cohesiveness of numerous plans, policies, and procedures in a high-stress environment, but outside the scope of a real emergency. Post-exercise activities are essential to realizing the benefits from an operations-based exercise. Careful analysis and prioritization should go into developing AAR recommendations and IP content.

#### ***Improvement Plan***

The IP is the means by which the lessons learned from the exercise are converted into concrete, measurable steps that will result in improved response capabilities. It is developed by the jurisdiction and specifically details the actions that will be taken to address each recommendation presented in the draft AAR, who or what agency will be responsible for taking the action, and the timeline for completion. Responsibility for an initial IP should be assigned at the exercise debrief. The final IP is included in the final AAR.

Some improvement actions will require resources to be expended; therefore, the IP should be realistic in establishing priorities. Recommendations related to critical tasks (as outlined in HSEEP Volume II) should receive top priority in resource allocation. The IP may identify the need for additional training or exercises. If no resources are available, alternative short- and long-term solutions, such as mutual aid agreements, should be considered.

#### ***After Action Conference***

The After Action Conference should be conducted after the AAR is developed and comments from key personnel are incorporated. The After Action Conference is typically a half-day workshop in which key personnel and the exercise planning team are presented with findings and recommendations from the AAR. The lead facilitator will review the AAR and ask participants to identify action items to address the issues and recommendations. Once action items have been identified, responsibility will be assigned to either an individual or agency/organization to complete each item. Due dates should be established.

***Tracking Implementation***

After the IP has identified recommendations and action items, and responsibility and due dates have been assigned, the jurisdiction should ensure that each action item is tracked to completion.

# Appendix A. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness Secure Web-Based Portal

## **Secure Portal**

Exercise materials for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness (DHS/ODP) Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) are located on a secure Web-based portal at <http://odp.esportals.com>. This site includes the following materials, tools, and capabilities:

- HSEEP Volumes I–IV
- Library of sample exercise materials and resources
- Exercise scheduling system
- Interim exercise reporting process
- Community forum to share ideas
- Links to Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) system (housed at the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism [MIPT])

## ***HSEEP Library***

Electronic versions of the first three HSEEP manuals and all Volume IV materials are located in the portal's library. These materials will be continually updated and enhanced based on changing conditions and best practices.

## ***Exercise Scheduler***

The exercise scheduler facilitates coordination among Federal, State, and local jurisdictions and minimizes personnel hours required to schedule and report an exercise. States and their respective local jurisdictions can schedule exercise planning conferences and exercise conduct dates through the scheduler. A calendar is created for each State based on exercise data (e.g., dates, times, types of exercises) entered by participating agencies and jurisdictions. This allows States to track and coordinate all exercise activities occurring in their jurisdictions and share schedules with DHS/ODP.

## ***Interim Exercise Reporting Process***

DHS/ODP is currently working with other Federal and State partners to develop a formal, collaborative, Web-based reporting system. Documentation that should be submitted to DHS/ODP includes:

- After Action Reports (AARs)
- Improvement Plans (IPs)
- Multiyear Exercise Plans

States can use the portal to submit this required documentation to DHS/ODP.

### ***HSEEP Forum***

DHS/ODP's Exercise Division welcomes suggestions, ideas, and comments on all HSEEP materials. The portal offers a collaborative environment in which documents can be enhanced and updated based on new ideas or changing conditions. The portal also includes a link to the DHS LLIS system.

Additional exercise tools will be posted and existing materials will be updated regularly; users should monitor the site for enhancements.

### ***Access/Security***

State Administrative Agencies (SAAs) and their designated training and exercise points of contact (POCs) will receive access to the portal via e-mail invitation. One to three representatives from each State will receive administrative rights to grant access to other agency and jurisdiction training and exercise coordinators. Only DHS/ODP managers and the respective State/jurisdiction representatives will have access to materials and information specific to a particular State (e.g., schedules, training evaluations).

### ***System Requirements***

Users must provide their own Internet access. The system does not rely heavily on graphics, so a dial-up connection should provide adequate performance. However, a higher speed connection is recommended for users who need to download the larger files (e.g., sample exercise documents, presentations). Any modern browser supporting SSL and 128-bit encryption should work. Support for style sheets may be required in the near future to provide for standards-based control over application appearance.

Most firewalls do not interfere with access to portal applications. Anyone who does experience access problems should contact the help desk at (804) 744-8800 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@espgroup.net](mailto:helpdesk@espgroup.net).

For additional information, please contact the Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) Help Line at (800) 368-6498.

### ***HSEEP Volume IV***

HSEEP Volume IV provides sample exercise documents and formats intended for exercise planners to use and/or modify when designing and developing exercises. Materials presented in HSEEP Volume IV are organized in a manner consistent with the outline and contents of HSEEP Volume III:

- Program Management
  - Contains sample materials (e.g., Exercise Plan [EXPLAN], Exercise Plan Workshop [EPW], policies) for use in developing and managing an exercise program
- Planning
  - Contains sample materials for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises
- Multimedia Library

- Contains video clips, sounds, and pictures that may be inserted into documentation or presentations to add a sense of realism
- References
  - Contains homeland security and emergency management resources such as publications, Web sites, and acronyms/definitions

Information on many of these materials is included in HSEEP Volume III. HSEEP Volume IV materials provide a minimum standard for exercise planning documentation. These materials should be tailored to the specific jurisdiction and exercise type. When planning and conducting an exercise with DHS/ODP funds<sup>1</sup>, and to ensure accordance with HSEEP, planners should develop and submit materials that are as close to this standard as possible. DHS/ODP Exercise Managers will periodically review these materials to ensure accordance with HSEEP policy and doctrine.

The materials in Volume IV are examples only. With the exception of AARs/IPs and Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs), a jurisdiction's materials do not have to follow the exact format used in the sample materials. The SAA and/or its designated POC, and the DHS/ODP Exercise Manager are responsible for ensuring the materials used in an exercise are in accordance with HSEEP and ultimately meet the requirements to obtain DHS/ODP exercise funding.

Some materials are provided in both template and example formats. Template documents use an outline format that users can modify and tailor to meet specific needs. Example materials are finished products that demonstrate what a template product should look like when completed. Users may choose the format they feel most comfortable with, but should be careful when using example materials (particularly scenario-related materials such as a Situation Manual [SITMAN]) not to simply "fill in the blank" or "copy and paste" information into a document without ensuring the content is accurate and pertinent.

HSEEP Volume IV includes the following materials that must remain in the same format:

- AAR
- IP
- EEGs

Other issues to consider:

- The Master Task Lists for both discussion-based exercises (e.g., seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises [TTXs], games) and operations-based exercises (e.g., drills, functional exercises [FEs], full-scale exercises [FSEs]) chronologically list the step-by-step process and action items that need to be accomplished during exercise planning and conduct.
- Many documents use the term "State" to refer to States, commonwealths, territories, and tribal nations. The term "State" also refers to the SAA or a designate that is responsible for exercise administration and coordination. Although DHS/ODP oversees and administers an Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), the SAA for the State in which a city is located is

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to DHS/ODP funding through either HSGP or UASI.

ultimately responsible for meeting the requirements outlined in HSEEP, and ensuring that urban areas and local jurisdictions are in accordance with this doctrine.

- These materials are not being disseminated in an effort to design and develop “canned” or “boilerplate” exercises. The intent in making these documents available to a wide audience is to lessen the burden on exercise planners who are designing and developing multiple exercises. Many of these materials, particularly those that present an exercise scenario, should be tailored to reflect participating or affected jurisdictions or organizations and bring realism to the exercise. Exercise success is based on participant actions, exhibited either through discussions or actual responses. Documents and materials simply lay the foundation for the exercise. Therefore, it is not necessary to spend an inordinate amount of time creating materials. Ultimately, the exercise outcomes, the valuable experience gained by participants, and the resulting improvements are the most important elements.
- Many of these materials are based on proven exercise programs, have been vetted through several organizations, and have gone through numerous iterations and revisions. Whereas it is evident that many materials derive from the same program, HSEEP Volume IV is intended to be a compilation of best practice materials from a variety of exercise programs.
- HSEEP Volume IV will be constantly evolving based on innovative ideas and changing conditions. New, updated, and revised materials will be posted to the portal as they become available. States that wish to submit ideas or documentation that they believe to be innovative materials that will enhance the exercise planning process should submit them through the DHS/ODP secure Web-based portal to the ODP Exercise Division (use the Secure Messaging link).
- Although the focus of these materials is on terrorism or chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive [CBRNE]-related incidents, many can be adapted to a variety of other scenarios (e.g., natural, technological). Materials also can be adapted to different types of exercises (e.g., seminars, workshops, TTXs, games, drills, FEs, FSEs). For example, a SITMAN is typically associated with the design and development of a TTX. However, a SITMAN should be flexible and adaptable to fit the needs of a workshop or seminar as well.
- Although users possess a variety of computer and software capabilities, electronic versions of HSEEP Volume IV materials are provided in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint only. Grant funding provided by DHS/ODP can be used to purchase computers and software for exercise planning purposes.
- These materials are intended for users who have varying levels of exercise experience.
- Although these materials are being disseminated on behalf of DHS and its partner agencies, the processes and documents can be adapted to exercise programs sponsored by other Federal agencies (e.g., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], the Transportation Security Administration [TSA]).
- Many materials include short descriptions and/or instructions for use.

## Appendix B. Acronyms

A/V	Audio/visual
AAR	After Action Report
C&O	Concept and Objectives
C/E	Controller and Evaluator
C/E Handbook	Controller and Evaluator Handbook
CBRNE	Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COSIN	Control Staff Instructions
CPX	Command post exercise
CSEPP	Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program
CSID	Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk
CST	National Guard Civil Support Team
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
EEG	Exercise Evaluation Guide
EMA	Emergency management agency
EMS	Emergency medical services
EMT	Emergency medical technician
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOD	Explosive ordnance disposal
EOP	Emergency operating procedure
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EPW	Exercise Plan Workshop
EVALPLAN	Evaluation Plan
EXPLAN	Exercise Plan
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FE	Functional exercise
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOUO	For Official Use Only
FPC	Final Planning Conference
FSE	Full-scale exercise
HazMat	Hazardous materials
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
HSGP	Homeland Security Grant Program
IC	Incident Command
ICS	Incident Command System
IP	Improvement Plan
IPC	Initial Planning Conference
LLIS	Lessons Learned Information Sharing
MIPT	National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism
MPC	Mid-Term Planning Conference

MSDS	Material Safety Data Sheet
MSEL	Master Scenario Events List
NEP	National Exercise Program
NSSE	National Special Security Events
NLD–DPP	Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Domestic Preparedness Program
ODP	Office for Domestic Preparedness
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PIO	Public Information Officer
POC	Point of contact
PROFLOW	Procedural Flow
REPP	Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program
RSP	Render-safe procedure
SAA	State Administrative Agency
SHSEEP	State Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
SIMCELL	Simulation cell
SITMAN	Situation Manual
SME	Subject matter expert
SNS	Strategic National Stockpile
SOE	Senior Officials Exercise
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics Team
TOPOFF	Top Officials National Exercise Series
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
TTX	Tabletop exercise
UASI	Urban Areas Security Initiative
UC	Unified Command
UCS	Unified Command System
VIP	Very Important Person
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction